

From the Chief Medical Officer  
Dr Henrietta Campbell CB



Department of  
**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**

An Roinn

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta  
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

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**URGENT COMMUNICATION**

**HSS(MD)27-2004**

To:  
All General Practitioners  
All Locum General Practitioners  
All Community Pharmacists  
All Hospital Pharmacists  
Directors of Public Health (*for onward dissemination to all duty Public Health Doctors*)  
Medical Directors (*for onward dissemination to Consultants in A&E Departments, Consultants in Adult/Paediatric Intensive Care*)  
Dr P Jackson, Con in Adult/Paediatric Infectious Disease  
Dr S Hedderwick, Con in Adult/Paediatric Infectious Disease  
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control  
Regional Epidemiologist, CDSC(NI)  
Consultant Microbiologists

Your Ref:  
Our Ref: HSS(MD)27-2004  
Date: 31<sup>st</sup> August 2004

Dear Colleague

**CONFIRMED RABIES IN A DOG IN SOUTH WEST FRANCE**  
**Exposure Period: 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2004 to 21<sup>st</sup> August 2004**

Please draw this message to the attention of the relevant staff in your unit:

**Action**

The DHSSPS urges clinicians and other healthcare professionals to be vigilant for persons reporting dog bites or other high risk contact to dogs in SW France. This relates to possibility of exposure to rabies through having had high risk contact with a specific dog now known to have had rabies and which was in South West France and infectious between August 2<sup>nd</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> this year. The dog only became symptomatic after August 17<sup>th</sup>

The places and dates where the dog was present are very specific and are as follows:

Place in South West France	Period
<b>Bordeaux centre</b>	03/08/2004 – 21/08/2004
• <b>Old Bordeaux</b>	03/08/2004 – 21/08/2004
• <b>River-banks of the Garonne</b>	18/08/2004
• <b>Public garden</b>	03/08/2004 – 21/08/2004
• <b>Bordeaux lake</b>	10/08/2004 - 11/08/2004
<b>Hostens (including the beach)</b>	02/08/2004
<b>Périgueux</b>	05/08/2004 Festival
<b>Miramont de Guyenne</b>	07/08/2004 - 08/08/2004 Festival
<b>Libourne</b>	12/08/2004 - 14/08/2004 Festival

## High Risk Contact is defined as:

Bites
Scratches
Grazes
Licking of mucosa, e.g mouth or eye
Licking of broken skin

The dog was also characteristic being a female only 4 months old, of average size with long brown hair, tail and ears. A picture of it is on the HPA web site at:

[http://www.hpa.org.uk/hpa/news/articles/press\\_releases/2004/040828\\_rabies.htm](http://www.hpa.org.uk/hpa/news/articles/press_releases/2004/040828_rabies.htm)

General information on rabies is at :

[http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics\\_az/rabies/menu.htm](http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics_az/rabies/menu.htm)

**This information is being put out through the media and so members of the public may be reporting to GPs and Accident and Emergency Departments.**

**There may have been people who presented before 28<sup>th</sup> August 2004 with a history of dog bite or other contact and who may have been reassured because France is rabies free. Hence doctors are especially asked to check recent records for patients for whom this might have been and to recall such patients to recheck their stories.**

Aside from dog bites rabies can occasionally be transmitted by scratches or licks on mucous membranes or cuts. However simply touching or stroking a dog does not constitute a risk Therefore a careful history should be taken of people reporting any such exposure and to then seek expert advice on a risk assessment. Treatment is by vaccine and immunoglobulin though this should only be used under expert advice and if there seems to have been an exposure.

Advice on the use of human rabies immunoglobulin (HRIG) is at:

[http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics\\_az/immunoglobulin/menu.htm](http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics_az/immunoglobulin/menu.htm) under rabies.

Because stocks of immunoglobulin are limited and use of any such biological sourced product is not risk free HRIG is used judiciously. Immunoglobulin is available from the Public Health Laboratory at Belfast City Hospital.

A detailed algorithm is attached to assist with the risk assessment of any patient with a potential exposure to this dog (Annex A). Expert advice is also available from CCDCs at Boards. **Any clinician who determines that a patient has been in contact with this dog in France and has had a high risk exposure should inform their local CCDC as soon as possible.**

## Background

The dog, which has died, had been imported illegally into the European Union through Spain from Morocco and then onto France. The animal has had contact with both humans and with other dogs including in tourist areas. Some people are known to have been bitten. The French health authorities are attempting to trace and treat those individuals in France and other countries have been alerted.

Further information on this incident will appear on the HPA web-site [www.hpa.org](http://www.hpa.org).

Yours sincerely



**Dr Lorraine Doherty**  
**Senior Medical Officer**

cc: Dr H Campbell, Chief Medical Officer, DHSSPS  
Miss J Hill, Chief Nursing Officer, DHSSPS  
Mr N Morrow, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, DHSSPS  
Mr Houston, Chief Veterinary Officer, DARD  
Dr McIlroy, Chief Scientific Officer, DARD  
Dr E Mitchell, Principal Medical Officer, DHSSPS  
Mr Shannon, Information Office, DHSSPS  
Miss J Mairs, Regional Procurement Pharmacist  
Dr M McClelland, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service

This letter is available at [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk) and also on the DHSSPS Extranet which can be accessed directly at <http://extranet.dhsspsni.gov.uk> or by going through the HPSS Web at <http://www.n-i.nhs.uk> and clicking on DHSSPS.

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## Rabies in Dog in SW France – August 2004

Health Protection Agency – Decision Tool Translated from that produced by the  
Institute de Veille Sanitaire - Version August 29<sup>th</sup> 2004

### Tool to evaluate possible contacts with the dog at the centre of the alert

This grid is a decision-making tool to decide whether the person has had a significant contact with the dog responsible for the alert.

All parts of the grid should be completed. The description of the dog that tested positive on the 26/08/04 is too vague to be the sole identifying element and it is essential to also take into account the geography and dates. **Note persons may have been reassured previously before presence of this single case of rabies in France was appreciated.**

Place	Period	Y/N
Bordeaux centre	03/08/2004 – 21/08/2004	
• Old Bordeaux	03/08/2004 – 21/08/2004	
• River-banks of the Garonne	18/08/2004	
• Public garden	03/08/2004 – 21/08/2004	
• Bordeaux lake	10/08/2004 - 11/08/2004	
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Périgueux	05/08/2004 Festival	
Miramont de Guyenne	07/08/2004 - 08/08/2004 Festival	
Libourne	12/08/2004 - 14/08/2004 Festival	

Description of the dog	Y/N
Colour brown, black muzzle	
Height 50 cm	
Floppy ears	
Hair – straight and half-length	
Face pointed	
Tail long	

High risk contacts	Y/N
Bites	
Scatches	
Grazes	
Licking of mucosa	
Licking of broken skin	

**Criteria for a positive evaluation (need to urgently contact Health Protection Agency VRD/ CDSC duty doctor – 0208-200-6868 or equivalent in Scotland):**

Place and date compatible with a contact with the dog in question

AND

Description of the dog agrees or is not specified or is unknown (for a young child unable to describe)

AND

High risk contact (yes response to one of the contact boxes) or type of contact impossible to specify (young child for example)

**Are regarded as contacts not presenting a risk:**

Stroked the dog without being licked (no contact with saliva)

Licked on healthy and intact skin

Contact with an object licked or bitten by the dog

Contact with a person in contact with the dog at the source of the alert

**More information and picture of the dog at**

**[http://www.hpa.org.uk/hpa/news/articles/press\\_releases/2004/040828\\_rabies.htm](http://www.hpa.org.uk/hpa/news/articles/press_releases/2004/040828_rabies.htm)**