



The Hong Kong Veterinary Association Ltd

Press Release

HKVA reminds owners to protect their pets against rabies

The Hong Kong Veterinary Association (HKVA) supports World Rabies Day held on the 28th September - recognising the importance of raising awareness in Hong Kong about a deadly disease that threatens the health and welfare of Hong Kong's human and animal population.

Hong Kong has been free from rabies for over two decades but its presence in neighbouring regions presents a real and constant threat. Despite being 100% preventable, it is estimated that 55,000 people die worldwide from rabies each year, approximately one person every ten minutes.

China has the second highest number of human rabies cases of any country in the world, with the incidence of the disease being highest in the southern provinces and re-entry of the disease to Hong Kong being an ever present threat.

"Hong Kong is well protected by its mandatory dog licensing and vaccination programme along with import control regulations and border inspection procedures" said HKVA President, Dr. Tom Mangan. However, he urged pet owners to continue to play their important role in rabies prevention. "It's vital that dog owners get their dogs vaccinated against rabies and remember to get them re-vaccinated every three years and ensure that their dog's registration details are up to date." he added.

Dr Ken Thorley, a member of the HKVA veterinary public health subcommittee cited the risk of the virus being introduced to Hong Kong unwittingly via a smuggled dog or cat as one of the professions major concerns. "The public need to be more aware about rabies and the serious risks posed to both humans and animals should it be brought in." he said. "Every day we hear stories about the smuggling of cats and dogs into Hong Kong, people never think they will be affected but they could. Rabies has a long incubation period - infected animals look healthy during this period and even cute puppies and kittens can be infected. Once rabies develops it's an almost guaranteed death sentence; it's just not worth the risk."

To help to keep Hong Kong rabies free and its residents and pets safe the Hong Kong Veterinary Association reminds people to:

Vaccinate their dogs against rabies in compliance with the law

To keep their dogs under proper control

Not to illegally import animals

To find out more about rabies and making rabies merely a footnote in history visit www.worldrabiesday.org