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# News Release

"We work together to build and maintain a community of the highest quality for present and future generations."

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Abilene Animal Services Adopts New Distemper Protocols

ABILENE, Texas – Abilene Animal Services has implemented new procedures to reduce exposure to the distemper virus after learning of six confirmed cases of distemper last week. The procedures follow advice provided to the shelter by Dr. Gerryll Hall, a Lead Veterinarian for Merck Pharmaceuticals.

Dr. Hall explained that there has been a rise of distemper cases all throughout Texas. Abilene is just the latest area to experience this disease. Dr. Hall also noted that distemper is carried by raccoons and other wildlife so pet owners should protect their dogs from any contact with wildlife.

Dr. Russell Ueckert, of Big Country explained, "Canine distemper virus can be difficult to diagnose because the first signs; vomiting, diarrhea, coughing and sneezing look like many other conditions that affect dogs. The illness is highly contagious and is easily spread between dogs. Canine distemper virus is included in almost all vaccinations given to puppies and most puppies develop protective immunity after two or three rounds of vaccine depending on age. All unvaccinated dogs are at risk of developing the disease regardless of age. Treatment of canine distemper virus is supportive care and there is no cure. The disease can progress to a neurologic form (muscle twitches to seizures) from which recovery is much more difficult and many dogs die or are euthanized when they reach this stage of the disease."

"Abilene's shelter is ahead of the curve when compared to some communities because of the core vaccine program adopted in 2016 which allows for vaccination of all dogs and cats in the shelter with age appropriate vaccines," stated Animal Services Director Mirenda Walden. "Any disease that is in the community will also be seen in the shelter, but now that we know of confirmed cases, we can be even more vigilant."

Other protocols that have been adopted are focused on keeping the immune system of the dogs as strong as possible including enhanced nutrition and parasite protection. All dogs that show any disease symptoms will be isolated. The shelter's current sanitation regimen also includes the use of products that kill the distemper virus.

The best action that a dog owner can take to protect their dog from distemper is to have a current vaccine. The Animal Services is hosting a vaccination clinic on Saturday, May 12. To register your dogs, please visit the shelter.

For more information, please contact Animal Services Director Mirenda Walden.  
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