

CSTE POSITION STATEMENT 1990-14

COMMITTEE: Infectious Disease

TITLE: Use of Animal Rabies Vaccines for Species Not Specified on Label

ISSUE: When animal rabies vaccines are administered to species other than those for which the United States Department of Agriculture has licensed the vaccine, owners may gain a false sense of security about the protection offered their pet. This places public health officials in a difficult position when they try to take the proper public health actions in response to a rabies exposure.

POSITION TO BE ADOPTED: CSTE recommends that the American Veterinary Medical Association make every effort to advise veterinarians and animal owners of the inadvisability of administering rabies vaccines to animals other than those that are indicated on the label of the vaccine.

BACKGROUND/JUSTIFICATION: In order for USDA to include a species on the labels of rabies vaccines, the vaccine has to have undergone a challenge study in that species. Extra-label use of rabies vaccine for species other than those listed in the label carries no assurance of protection for that species. Owners gain a false sense of security which may put their animal and subsequently themselves at risk for rabies exposure. When such inappropriately vaccinated animals bite a person or are exposed to a potentially rabid animal, public health officials must treat them as unvaccinated, usually requiring euthanasia. Owners who do not understand that rabies vaccination of their animal was not appropriate make the enforcement of proper public health measures very difficult and add considerably to the time and effort required to handle a rabies exposure case.

Although only one modified-live animal rabies vaccine is presently on the market, its use in a wild or exotic animal in which it has not been tested could result in vaccine induced rabies.

CONSULTATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS: Agency for Response: American Veterinary Medical Association; Agency for Information: National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians

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