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**Summary of our investigation of Rocky Mountain spotted fever diagnosed in metro dogs:**

MMCD recently finished investigating reports of metro-acquired dog Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) cases; 4 diagnosed between Summer 2012 and Spring 2013 at a vet office in Minneapolis, and 1 diagnosed this spring in the north metro. These cases caught our attention as the initial cluster of 4 dog cases was unusual and then the next day we received the north metro report of RMSF circulating. We knew, if validated, these dog diagnoses would be significant as RMSF infects both dogs and people and is a very serious illness which can be fatal.

These particular dog RMSF diagnoses remain inconclusive. While most of the dog cases responded to antibiotic treatment and could very well have been caused by a tick-borne disease, an actual titer amount needs to be known to determine if the cases were actually RMSF. The laboratories typically don't titrate unless asked to and additionally, the type of antibody testing performed by these labs can be cross reactive with other bacteria that circulate in the metro. On the human side, the MDH receives many reports with low positive antibody titers that in the end, don't meet their RMSF case definition.

Through this investigation we learned there could be some room for improvement in communication. We became aware of these diagnosed cases only by happenstance; the first 4 cases (final count was 3) became known via attendance at a dog rescue club picnic, and the additional case through a diligent staff member taking the time to inform their Tick Team representative at their facility, who then diligently informed the St Paul office. We assume dog RMSF cases are passively reportable to the Board of Animal Health and fall into the category of "vector-borne diseases of public health significance (excluding Lyme disease)". The MDH is only responsible for human health so is unable to directly investigate possible animal sentinels.

While the results of this particular investigation were inconclusive, we are satisfied that we learned enough to feel comfortable saying that we are probably not facing a pending RMSF epidemic at this time. We will continue to take note of future events and make assessments as warranted by each situation.

We appreciate the assistance of Karen Bell-Brugger, owner of the Borzoi with the initial RMSF diagnosis, Marnie Loven-Bell, President Northstar Great Pyrenees Rescue of Minnesota, Eva Knudsen, Field Operations Supervisor North Region MMCD, veterinarian Dr Deb Hlavka and staff, veterinarian Dr David Datt, Dr Ulrike Munderloh UM - St Paul, and Dave Neitzel, MDH.

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