

# Rabies case in an imported puppy in Finland

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# Background

- 12 weeks old puppy in Delhi, India
- According to the certificates the puppy was:
  - vaccinated on 21 October
  - identified with transponder on 1 November
  - de-wormed but the preparation was not clearly indicated
  - no test for rabies antibodies
- A Finnish citizen travelled with the puppy to Finland on 4 November



# 4 Nov Helsinki-Vantaa airport

- Through customs although inadequate documents
  - customs officer trusted the importers' explanations
  - customs did not inform the veterinary authorities about the case
- To a family of relatives in Espoo, southern Finland
- According to the customs officer and the owner the puppy was clinically healthy



# 5 – 6 November

- Family contacted municipal veterinary officer in Espoo
  - concerns about the origin of the puppy
- Veterinary officer ordered the puppy to be isolated and contacted the Finnish Food Safety Authority (Evira)
- Before the veterinary officer arrived the owner with the puppy travelled to another family to Humppila in the province of western Finland
- The puppy stayed there in isolation on 5-6 Nov



# 7-8 November

- The provincial veterinarian in Espoo received full information on the certificates and documents
- The puppy was moved for isolation in a summer cottage in Punkalaidun (25 km away from Humppila)
- Negotiations whether to kill the puppy or return it to India
  - owner wanted to arrange a flight back
- The puppy kept indoors with the owner or trusted holder all the time



# 9 November

- The puppy had got sick with fever and apathy in the previous evening (8 Nov) and was brought to municipal veterinary officer
- The puppy was euthanised and sent to Evira for autopsy
- Findings: osteomyelitis, a fractured mandibula, a fistula in the skin originating from a previous abscess in the mandibula, encephalitis
- Samples for virology were taken



# 12 – 16 November

- 12 Nov FA test positive
- 13 Nov RT-PCR positive
- 14 Nov sequencing
  - 98 % identity with Indian strains
  - press release, e-mail letter to the Commission and neighbouring countries, including Russia
- 15 Nov notification to the OIE
- 16 Nov virus isolation in MNA cells was positive



# Contacts

- Several human contacts have been identified with potential exposure by the health authorities
  - all these peoples have been admitted for appropriate treatment
- Possible animal contacts have been traced
- Conclusion: no risk that the puppy had spread rabies to other animals
- One guinea pig in the first family in Espoo has been euthanised as a measure of precaution



# Future actions in Evira

- Request to the police for official investigation of the case
- Request to the customs to fully report on the actions taken/not taken
- Intensified education of customs officers and reminder that veterinary authorities must be contacted immediately in suspicious cases
  - enforcement of training already agreed with the customs
- Intensified communication targeted at pet owners and pet associations



# Future actions in Evira

- Intensified BIP control, e.g. special actions for controls in ferry terminals and airports already this year
- A thorough analysis the case together with the customs when all information is available
- developing the control system at all levels and to increase the awareness of the pet owners and associations to avoid such imports in future



Thank you!

