

## **MONKEYPOX Q AND A**

### **What is monkeypox?**

Monkeypox is an orthopoxvirus that is closely related to smallpox and exhibits a similar pustular rash. Monkeypox is typically found in West African rain forests.

Community-acquired monkeypox has never before occurred in the United States. Several previously known cases were acquired by laboratory workers working with imported monkeys.

### **What are the symptoms?**

The incubation period is about 12 days. The majority of individuals had a characteristic rash and fever. Over half had respiratory symptoms and swollen lymph nodes as well.

Clinicians should consider monkeypox in people with fever, cough, headache, myalgias, rash or lymph node enlargement within 3 weeks after contact with prairie dogs or giant Gambian rats.

### **What should a person do if they have been exposed to an animal they are concerned could have monkeypox?**

Watch your own health and the health of family members carefully for signs of monkeypox. If you, or someone you have been in close contact, have had contact with a potentially infected pet and within 3 weeks develop a fever, headache, backache, swollen lymph nodes, or a rash, contact your health-care provider immediately.

### **What should a person do if they think they might have monkeypox?**

If you think you think you may have monkeypox contact your health-care provider immediately.

## **Monkeypox in the United States**

### **Where has human monkeypox been reported in the United States?**

For current information about the number of human monkeypox cases under investigation in the United States, see the CDC case count page. Check the CDC Web site for the monkeypox case definition and other current information about the outbreak.

### **How did these people become infected with monkeypox virus?**

On the basis of preliminary investigations, it appears that most of the patients became ill after having close contact with infected prairie dogs that had been purchased as pets. Traceback investigations have found a common distributor of exotic pets where prairie dogs and Gambian giant rats were housed together in Illinois. The Gambian rats were shipped to the United States from Ghana. The shipment contained a large number of other small mammals that might have been the actual source of monkeypox. In addition, the possibility of human-to-human transmission in some cases cannot be excluded at this time.

**How is it transmitted?**

Primary transmission appears to come from direct contact with an infected animal. In previous monkeypox outbreaks in Africa, person to person (secondary transmission) can occur in about 10% of close (household) contacts. The disease appears to become less infectious with each generation of human to human transmission. At this time, there is no evidence that person to person transmission has occurred during this outbreak.

**How transmissible is monkeypox?**

Monkeypox is not as transmissible as measles, chickenpox, or smallpox. At this time, it appears that direct contact with an infected animal is necessary for infection to occur.

**How do you treat monkeypox?**

There is no specific treatment for monkeypox. In Africa, people who got the smallpox vaccine in the past had a lower risk of monkeypox. CDC has sent out guidelines explaining when smallpox vaccine should be used to protect against monkeypox. For example, people taking care of someone infected with monkeypox should think about getting vaccinated. Contact your state or local health department for more information.

**My prairie dog (or giant Gambian rat) is sick, what do I do?**

At this time, monkeypox in prairie dogs appears to be limited to animals that were sold through three pet stores in Milwaukee, or who may have been sold through a Wausau (WI) swap meet. It is unknown if other retail outlets are involved. If you have recently acquired your prairie dog, then you should check with your pet retailer to see where they acquired the prairie dogs. If the prairie dog was acquired through SK Exotics, Hoffer TropicLife Pets, Rainbow Pets, or the Wausau swap meet, then you should call your veterinarian and discuss diagnosis and treatment options with them BEFORE you visit the veterinarian. Also, notify your local health department or the Utah Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology (801) 538-6191.

If your prairie dog is not recently acquired from one of the above distribution sites, and is ill, you may treat it as you normally would. Ensure that you wash your hands thoroughly after handling the animal or its bedding.

**Infection control measures**

Avoid contact with prairie dogs or giant Gambian rats that appear ill. Prairie dogs with monkeypox had missing patches of fur, lesions on their skin, and respiratory symptoms (discharge from eyes or nose). Wash your hands thoroughly following any contact with sick animals. It is important that ill prairie dogs NEVER be released into the wild. If the prairie dog has a disease, it could infect wild prairie dogs. For other options for sick prairie dogs, please call the Department of Agriculture and Food (801-538-7100) or the Department of Wildlife Resources (801-538-4700).

**Monkeypox in the Utah**

Currently, there are no reported cases of infected prairie dogs or individuals in Utah.

For more information, contact the Office of Epidemiology at 801-538-6191.