

DEM ANNOUNCES FEDERAL BAN ON PRAIRIE DOGS AND AFRICAN RODENTS (2003)

Joint order from the CDC, FDA and Department of Health and Human Services prohibits sale, transport and release of animals associated with the Monkey Pox outbreak.

Providence -- The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management has announced a national embargo and prohibition on the importation, transport, sale, distribution, transfer, and release into the environment all prairie dogs and six species of African rodents.

This federal order was issued jointly by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHS). The prohibition became effective on June 11, 2003, and will remain in effect until further notice.

This action was taken immediately after six species of African rodents that were imported into the State of Texas were implicated a subsequent outbreak of Monkey Pox. Those rodents thereafter exposed native prairie dogs in an Illinois pet shop, resulting in numerous human cases of the Monkey Pox Virus.

Species included in the ban are Prairie dogs (*Cynomys* sp.) and the following rodents from Africa: Tree squirrels (*Heliosciurus* sp.); Rope squirrels (*Funisciurus* sp.); Dormices (*Graphiurus* sp.); Gambian Giant Pouched rats (*Cricetomys* sp.); Brush-tailed porcupines (*Atherurus* sp.), Striped mice (*Hybomys* sp.).

In compliance with the ban,

- The Rhode Island State Veterinarian office has issued notice and quarantined any of animals of the banned species found in Rhode Island pet shops. Investigation and tracing of pet shop animals has shown that there is no known association or evidence of disease in any of the animals recently imported or sold in Rhode Island.
- All veterinarians, animal control officials, animal shelters and animal facilities are required to report all animals of the banned species to the Animal Health Office.
- Animals of banned species that are owned by the public must remain in place and cannot be transported, sold, exchanged, released or moved without the permission of the State Veterinarian.
- All deaths or illness, including euthanasia, must be reported immediately so that the animal can be evaluated and the remains disposed of in a safe manner.

These measures are necessary in order to minimize any potential exposure to the public or other mammals.

The State Veterinarians Office wishes to stress that there is no known link to the current outbreak in the Midwest prairie dogs and African rodents that have been residing in Rhode Island for over 30 days and have no signs of illness or known link to the disease are considered safe and of no concern.

Reporting of suspect cases and any questions or concerns should be directed to the Animal Health Section of the RIDEM at 401-222-2781, or after hours to the RIDEM Enforcement at 401-222-2284.