La. rabies outbreak causing concern

By MARY BROUSSARD
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LIVINGSTON — When Livingston Parish chief sanitarian John Sziber was a child in the Hungarian Settlement in the eastern portion of the parish, he and his sister took great interest in their uncle's dog.

"I remember it was a pretty cute little cocker spaniel, jet black," he said.

The two children played with the dog one Sunday and didn't think much of it until they learned the animal acted strangely the next day.

It turned out the animal was rabid and the two children had to go through a series of rabies shots because they had been in contact with the infected animal.

That experience has been on John Sziber's mind a lot lately because Livingston and other parts of south Louisiana are undergoing the largest rabies outbreak in decades.

Since Jan. 1 public health officials have confirmed 38 cases of rabid animals. Five of those were reported last week.

John Sziber, recalling his childhood encounter with rabies, said his uncle took the dog to public health officials in New Orleans, who euthanized the animal and examined its brain.

When authorities determined the dog was rabid, Sziber and his sister had to take 14 shots to build up their immunity against rabies, an infectious disease of the central nervous system transmitted to people who are bitten or who come in contact with an infected animal.

Sziber, now 59, said he remembers refusing to take the shots in the abdomen and receiving them in his buttocks. If the dog had bitten either child, each child would have needed 21 shots. Today, only six shots are required.

Sziber is again worried about rabies in Livingston Parish.

In February, health officials documented three rabies cases in Livingston Parish, in two foxes and one raccoon near Holden. Sziber said he is concerned about the sudden outbreak of rabies.

Emile Macaluso, center, cradles his pet dog, Coco, as Chris Antonellis, left, and veterinarian Elizabeth Eastin apply a shot for rabies during a recent vaccination clinic in Livingston Parish.

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Rabies outbreak

Since Jan. 1, a total of 36 cases of rabies have been confirmed in Louisiana. Parish: 26 cases; 13 cases in the state at large. The state's rabies control program was started in 1963 by Dr. B. L. B. J. M. (B. L. B. J. M.) of the Louisiana Department of Health and Welfare, and it has been operated since then by the Louisiana Department of Health and Welfare, under the direction of Dr. B. L. B. J. M.

Rabies cases by parish

Livingston Parish: 3 (two cats, one dog)

St. John Parish: 2

St. Mary Parish: 1

The following cases have been reported to the Louisiana Department of Health and Welfare:

- Livingston Parish
  - Three cases of rabies have been reported in Livingston Parish, which is located in the southern part of the state.
  - The first case involved a dog that was found dead in the parish.
  - The second case involved a cat that was found dead in the parish.
  - The third case involved a dog that was found dead in the parish.

- St. John Parish
  - Two cases of rabies have been reported in St. John Parish, which is located in the southern part of the state.
  - The first case involved a dog that was found dead in the parish.
  - The second case involved a cat that was found dead in the parish.

- St. Mary Parish
  - One case of rabies has been reported in St. Mary Parish, which is located in the southern part of the state.
  - The case involved a dog that was found dead in the parish.

- Parish Health Services
  - Parish Health Services are responsible for investigating and controlling rabies cases in their respective parishes. They work closely with the Louisiana Department of Health and Welfare to ensure that all cases are properly investigated and controlled.

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