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The Horry County Humane Society has closed its Conway facility through the weekend due to a confirmed case of distemper. The administration is consulting with local veterinarians and will take action based on their recommendations.

There is concern that the virus may have spread to other animals in the facility and overcrowding would be a major contributing factor. Currently the shelter has received 8,433 animals this year. Of those animals, more than 75% of them are picked up by animal control as lost or strayed. Unless an owner reclaims their pet and provides it's medical history, the staff has no way of knowing whether the animals vaccinations are current.

When we first suspected a canine had distemper, we immediately sent the animal for a diagnostic test. The test results were negative, however, as a precautionary measure, we closed the facility and did a thorough cleansing. In addition, all incoming canines were vaccinated immediately. On November 24th we got our first positive distemper diagnosis, and began reviewing each animal individually at the shelter. Unfortunately, symptoms of distemper may appear to be a typical upper respiratory infection, kennel cough which is a common and easily cured illness, which we often treat in-house. It is extremely important that pet owners ensure their pets receive the vaccinations recommended by their veterinarians to prevent this disease.

We are working with the County and to develop a plan which will allow the shelter not only to house more animals, but to establish a totally separate intake area to keep incoming animals who may be carriers of a disease from infecting other animals. This is of utmost importance with airborne diseases such as distemper, especially since the signs are highly variable – as many as 75 percent of cases are sub-clinical or mild, and it is very difficult to diagnose distemper in live dogs. Often it can begin with a runny nose and a little cough, which can be misconstrued as kennel cough.

We are in the process of contacting people that recently adopted from the facility. We always recommend any one adopting an animal take their new pet to their veterinarian within a few days of adopting.

Dogs can't add, Cat's can't subtract, but they sure can MULTIPLY! SPAY OR NEUTER YOUR PET!

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