

State, feds investigate illness that's sickened, killed dogs

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State and federal agencies are investigating an unknown illness that's sickened dogs in northern Michigan and killed at least 30 canines in one county after they exhibited signs of a parvo-like illness.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development said it's working with local animal control shelters, veterinarians, the Michigan State University's veterinary laboratory, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other partners on testing to determine the illness' cause.

The state agency said "several dogs" have fallen ill with the same symptoms in the state's northern Lower Peninsula with an illness similar to [canine parvovirus](#), which affects a dog's gastrointestinal tracts and is spread by dog-to-dog contact and contact with contaminated feces and environments.

One veterinarian told MDARD officials about treating a dog that was vomiting and had diarrhea, which are common symptoms of canine parvovirus. That canine, however, tested negative for the parvovirus at a veterinary clinic, the agency said.

The department said it has since heard from animal control agencies in northern Michigan regarding dogs with the same symptoms, the causes of which had not been determined.

State Veterinarian Nora Wineland said in a statement that "investigating

the details of unusual or reportable animal disease detections" is a key part of MDARD's mission.

In Otsego County, about 30 privately-owned and mostly unvaccinated dogs have died, said Melissa FitzGerald, the director of the county's animal control department. She said it does not appear that the dogs had contact with each other.

"It's scary," FitzGerald told the [Detroit Free Press](#). "There are many things that it could be."

Adrianna Potrafkey, who lives in northern Michigan, said that in early July four of her dogs woke up with bloody diarrhea and upset stomachs. All of them have since recovered, which Potrafkey credits in part to the vaccines they received as puppies.

She said she didn't work for two straight weeks because she was worried about leaving her dogs alone, saying her veterinarian was mystified by what was making her dogs ill.

"It impacted me a lot. I couldn't leave them in case something happened," she told [WXMI-TV](#).

MDARD said it was strongly encouraging dog owners to work with their [veterinarian](#) to ensure that their dog is up to date on routine vaccinations. A highly effective vaccine for parvovirus is available to protect [dogs](#) against that disease, the agency said.

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