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## Fake rabies vaccine has appeared in China

*China Daily August 3, 2007 (<http://www.china.org.cn>)*

At least 227 people have been given fake rabies vaccine. The gang which produced the vaccine hails from northeastern provinces and has been arrested. They passed off a mixture of starch and water as a genuine vaccine which is cleverly labeled. This vaccine has now been detected in many provinces and more victims are involved, including at least one rabies death. Heilongjiang's provincial food and drug administrators stated that the fake rabies vaccine had been detected in Mudanjiang City and also in Yilan and Fangzheng countries. An investigation is ongoing, they said. Considerable quantities of this rabies vaccine may, nevertheless, be in circulation throughout the country. At least 67 types of other fake drugs and pharmaceutical products have been found throughout China during the past two years. In total, police confiscated fake versions of 67 types of pharmaceuticals by 53 companies which are now under investigation or prosecution.

Recent figures from the Ministry of Health show that rabies killed more than 2,000 people in China last

year and there are regional shortages of quality vaccines that are manufactured by several reputable firms in country. Rabies, usually of canine origin, has been on the country's deadliest infectious diseases list for 13 of the past 14 months. The appearance of fake rabies vaccines on the markets of developing countries is not a new phenomenon. Nigeria had a similar problem reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) about one decade ago. The Semple (sheep brain) rabies vaccine manufactured by the Pakistan government is known to be of low or no potency as reported in peer review journals and to WHO. Samples have been tested at the Institute Pasteur in Paris and several contained no antigen at all. Rabies is still endemic and may be spreading in many Asian, African and South American countries. Travelers to China should be aware of this problem and avoid contact with dogs whenever possible. If they incur a possible rabies exposure, they should make sure that the vaccine and immunoglobulin that they receive is genuine.

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