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## Mixed reaction to Canada's ban on dogs from high rabies risk countries

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Ottawa's recent decision to ban the entry of commercial dogs into Canada from 100 countries — including war-torn Ukraine — that have a high risk of canine rabies has garnered mixed reaction. PHOTO BY ISTOCK /GETTY IMAGES

Ottawa's recent decision to ban the entry of commercial dogs into Canada from 100 countries — including war-torn Ukraine — that have a high risk of canine rabies has garnered mixed reaction.

Jeffrey Beri, the founder of the North American rescue outfit [No Dogs Left Behind](#), which has its sanctuary in Ontario, calls it “a huge blow to international rescues all around the world.”

“It's nothing shy of devastation,” Beri said.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency says the new measure will take effect on Sept. 28, which is also World Rabies Day.

Commercial dogs are defined as those intended for being given/transferred to another person, resale, adoption, fostering, breeding, show or exhibition and research.

Included on the banned list are dogs from almost anywhere in Africa, many Latin American and Caribbean countries, much of Asia and the Middle East including Afghanistan, and parts of eastern Europe.

Not included are those dogs returning or moving to Canada with their owners.

Toronto Humane Society CEO Phil Nichols says he isn't surprised by this development because the federal legislation has been in the works for the last six years.

He points to the example of the importation of 500 French bulldogs from Ukraine with 38 arriving dead in Toronto in June 2020.

"The risks are very real," said Nichols. "I think there's a combination of concerns when you're looking at high rabies countries. There's how much validity do we have in their medical records? If we don't strengthen regulations, we might be making strides to decrease puppy mills domestically but if our markets are supporting poor animal welfare, puppy mills, and bad breeding outside of Canada, that's something we should be taking measures and restrictions to prevent."

Still, Beri says the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention in the U.S. recently eased up on a similar ban and will now allow dogs with inoculations from a U.S.-licensed veterinarian to return from 113 banned countries, providing the animal is healthy, microchipped and at least six months old, and its owner can provide a valid U.S.-issued rabies vaccination certificate.

"When you cut off rescues from allowing them to import live animals or dogs – you essentially shut them down," said Beri.

He suggests instead that dogs are given a rabies titre test that checks for the presence of the antibody that neutralizes rabies in their blood.

"Allow rescues to continue to rescue the animals but implement a process and protocol where they have to take the dog to a recognized veterinarian laboratory for the rabies titre and if the dogs had the antibodies, well, that should be good enough for any country. It doesn't have to be all or nothing," said Beri.