



Wednesday 27 May 2009

RSPCA fears climate change could increase disease in pets

- Dogs may be first victims if infectious diseases spread -

New information presented at the second annual RSPCA conference will reveal the full effect of climate change on animal welfare.

The Climate Change Conference on 2nd June will be the first of its kind. Seven speakers will present new information on the effect of climate change on farm animal welfare, the spread of disease in dogs and effects on wildlife.

RSPCA Head of External Affairs David Bowles said: "There is a lot of science on the effects of climate change on biodiversity and the effects of farm animals on climate change. This conference will consider for the first time the effects on animal welfare. It will provide new information on the predicted increase in the spread of infectious diseases to dogs from the continent and how dog rescue organisations and shelters may need to change their procedures as new diseases spread in the UK."

Professor Sandy Trees, a specialist in Veterinary Parasitology at the University of Liverpool, will address the possibility of how a warming planet may result in a rise in infectious diseases in pets.

He warned: "Just as human travel may expose us to new disease threats, so increasingly free pet animal movement threatens pet health. Compounded in the longer term by climate change, these two phenomena of globalisation and global warming may see new and serious dog diseases becoming established in the UK."

Susan Shaw from the University of Bristol will highlight one example of this possible expansion of disease by presenting her research on the spread of heartworm, a parasitical disease spread by mosquitoes that affects dogs and some cats. It thrives in warmer conditions, and Susan will highlight the impact she believes its expansion will have on pet owners, organisations and the vet profession.

Tickets for the conference on Tuesday 2nd of June 2009 are selling fast, and interested parties are asked to book as soon as possible. The event will allow for discussion and debate, and delegates will be given the opportunity to raise questions.

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Notes for editors:

The Climate Change Conference will be held on Tuesday 2 June at One Great George Street, London, SW1P 3AA and runs from 9am-5pm.

To book a place visit: www.rspca.org.uk/summerconference or contact Rachel Tasker on 0300 123 0273, e-mail ratasker@rspca.org.uk

Standard delegate fee £70

Charity/student delegate fee: £50

No further information on the content of the conference is available, and spokespeople are not available for interview before the event.

Journalists are welcome to attend and should register their interest with Rob Harris in the national press office on 0300 123 0290.

Speakers include:

Lizzie Kendon, Hadley Centre Met Office

Francisco Javier Reviriego Gordejo, Head of Sector Disease Control and identification, DG Sanco

Catherine McLaughlin, Animal health and welfare policy advisor, NFU

Sandy Trees, Liverpool University

Susan Shaw, Bristol University

David Macdonald, WildCru, University of Oxford

Olly Watts, Climate change campaigner, RSPB