

SUBPAR VACCINE FOUND IN DELHI HOME

Twice in 2 years: Fake rabies jab probe plea

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New Delhi: A vaccine maker has, for the second time in less than two years, asked drug regulators to investigate an alleged substandard, counterfeit version of its anti-rabies vaccine, after law-enforcement authorities found vials bearing a genuine batch number in a home in Delhi.

Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL), which makes the vaccine Abhayrab, said the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) had drawn samples from vials labelled batch number KE25012 from an "unlicensed residential" site in Delhi, which were found to be "not of standard quality and misbranded".

"We have asked authorities to trace the source of the vials and take action against those responsible," IIL said, citing a representation made to the CDSCO, the country's apex drug regulatory authority, on



September 4, 2026.

IIL had made a similar request for investigation to the CDSCO on January 13, 2025, after the company itself had identified a counterfeit version of Abhayrab batch number KA24014 which, it said, was being sold in Ahmedabad, Delhi, Lucknow and Mumbai.

Experts say the alleged counterfeiting of such a critical product as an anti-rabies vaccine raises concerns over who made the fake vials, whether they entered the market, and what action drug regulators

have taken.

Rabies is almost invariably fatal once clinical symptoms appear, which makes effective and timely anti-rabies vaccination critical after potential exposure to the virus.

Medical experts have estimated that roughly three million people receive anti-rabies vaccines in India each year.

After the 2025 counterfeiting case, IIL had said in a statement that it had supplied more than 210 million doses of Abhayrab to Indian and global markets, describing it as "the most trusted brand in the country", which holds about 40 per cent of the anti-rabies vaccine market.

Drug regulatory authorities in Australia, the UK, and the US had independently issued advisories between October and December 2025, alerting the public after the earlier counterfeit batch KA24014.

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The CDSCO said on Saturday that it had arrested four people in connection with the KE25012 case and had alerted all state drug regulators on August 27 with details of the misbranding and with instructions to maintain "strict vigilance over the movement, distribution and availability" of the batch.

The CDSCO also said no part of batch number KE25012 had been exported to any country.

Queries sent by this newspaper to the CDSCO about the specific instructions it had given to state regulators to identify and prevent the circulation of the counterfeit batch and the outcome of the previous investigation into counterfeit batch number KA24014 have elicited no response.

IIL said it had released 83,370 vials of the genuine batch KE25012, which were

supplied only through the company's authorised distribution channel. "No market complaint has been received in respect of the batch number KE25012," the company said.

It said every batch of Abhayrab is released for sale only after independent testing and batch release certification by the Central Drugs Laboratory. "Vaccine(s) administered at a hospital, clinic, government facility or licensed pharmacy reaches the patient through that released and authorised supply chain and is not affected by this matter," the company said.

A public health official said dog bite victims who seek vaccines from hospitals are unlikely to encounter the counterfeit product. "Government as well as private hospitals procure the vaccines directly from the company's authorised channels," Omesh Bharti, a public health official in Himachal Pradesh, told The Tele-

graph. "It is unclear where or for whom the counterfeit vials were aimed."

The seizure of the counterfeit KE25012 took place on April 22 when Delhi police's crime branch and drug inspectors searched an unlicensed residential site in Delhi. CDSCO officials were called to the site and drew samples that were sent to the Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) in Kasauli for examination.

The CDSCO received the CDL report in August, more than three months after the samples were tested, an official familiar with the sequence of events told this newspaper. The CDSCO statement does not explain the reason for the lag between the seizure and the lab report.

The lab had found 17 differences between the counterfeit vial and a sample of the genuine batch supplied by the vaccine maker.