

For Immediate Release

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First Rabies Case in Southwest Nebraska for 2020

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has confirmed the first positive rabies case in the health district for the year, found in a skunk. “We want to remind all residents to be aware of their surroundings and to not approach or handle wild or unfamiliar animals,” explains Melissa Propp, Disease Surveillance Coordinator.

According to the Center for Disease Control, rabies is a medical emergency. Any wounds should be immediately washed with soap and water. They should also receive medical attention from a health care professional. Rabies is a deadly virus infection that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. People get rabies from the bite of an animal with rabies.

Animals with rabies may act differently from healthy animals. Wild animals may move slowly or may act as if they are tame. A pet that is usually friendly may snap at you or may try to bite. If you are around an animal which displays any of the below signs of rabies, move yourself and others to safety:

- aggression
- increased drooling
- problems swallowing
- general sickness
- changes in an animal’s behavior

If you discover a dead wild animal that may have infected your pets:

- Remove the animal from the area by using a shovel, wearing gloves, and placing the carcass in a plastic bag
- Wash your hands in soap and water after taking off your gloves
- Avoid direct contact between the carcass and the person
- Disinfect tools, cages, gloves, and other surfaces potentially contaminated with saliva, nervous tissue, or blood with a 10 percent solution of household bleach in water.

“Vaccination is the best protection for keeping your pets safe,” states Propp. “We recommend that residents contact their local veterinarian to make sure your pet’s vaccinations are current. In addition, please be careful around stray or strange animals. If an animal bites you, and it is safe to do so, catch the animal and contact your veterinarian for testing. It may save you the pain and cost of rabies vaccinations.” Contact your local veterinarian and the public health department about rabies testing and exposures.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. For more information call Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street, McCook (one block north of Arby’s). You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook and Twitter.