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For Immediate Release
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Positive Rabies Case in Southwest Nebraska

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has confirmed the first positive rabies case in Southwest Nebraska for the year. The rabies exposure is with a cow in Keith County.

“Rabies in cattle occurs less often than in dogs or cats,” explains Melissa Propp, Public Health Nurse. “The only way to diagnose rabies is with a laboratory test performed after death. Because cattle symptoms may mimic other more common diseases, people may be exposed to the infected animal while it is contagious. The best method to prevent human exposure is to ensure that livestock, horses and pets are protected against rabies with current vaccinations.”

In cattle as in other warm-blooded animals, rabies is a severe, rapidly progressing neurological disease. It is transmitted via saliva, most commonly through bite wounds from an infected wild animal. Although symptoms may appear anytime from two weeks to several months after exposure, on average symptoms appear four to eight weeks after the exposure. Death usually occurs two to four days after the animal begins to show clinical signs.

Rabies should be suspected in all livestock that show a sudden onset of rapidly progressing neurological signs. However, cows with rabies may also show a wide range of clinical signs that resemble other more common diseases:

- Depression
- Difficulty with eating or drinking
- Increased aggression
- Lameness and/or incoordination
- Loud bellowing
- Excessive drooling
- Odd behavioral changes, nervousness, irritability
- Convulsions or seizures

The Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control (see <http://nasphv.org/Documents/RabiesCompendium.pdf>) published by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians recommends that vaccination be considered for valuable livestock, horses traveling interstate, and animals that have frequent human contact (such as public exhibition like fairs and petting zoos).

According to the Center for Disease Control, rabies is a medical emergency. Any person with a suspected exposure should wash wounds immediately with soap and water and seek medical attention from a healthcare professional right away. Rabies is a deadly viral infection that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals if not treated quickly after an exposure.

Contact your local veterinarian, local healthcare provider and public health department regarding 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, Instagram and Twitter.

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