

July 10, 2026

For Immediate Release

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Respect Wildlife, Protect Your Health

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) would like to remind everyone to use caution around wild animals or animals you do not know. Wildlife can carry diseases that are infectious to people. Sick animals or those protecting babies may be more likely to bite or injure humans.

“Bats, skunks and racoons are common carriers of rabies that live in our area,” explains Cathy Strudle, Emergency Response Coordinator at SWNPHD. “They can wander on and off your property, leaving you or your animals exposed to their hidden and potentially deadly little secret... RABIES.”

During the warm weather wild animals become more active, increasing both the spread of rabies and your risk of encountering wildlife. Southwest Nebraska has seen its share of rabies over the last year. Since last June, there have been 4 positive animal rabies tests in the health district.

If in doubt, suspect rabies in all wildlife, but especially those that show a sudden change in behavior, such as animals normally active at night being seen during the day.

Bats, although important bug eaters in Nebraska, are a common carrier of rabies. Bats should always be treated with caution, especially if they need to be removed from human spaces. Trap and remove bats using containers and thick gloves to make sure there is no direct contact or contact a professional to remove them. If you do have contact with a bat or wake up with one in your room, attempt to safely capture the bat and take it to the vet for rabies testing.

“When it comes to animals, keeping a safe distance is your best bet,” continues Strudle. “Remember the saying: Treat them with respect, keep your distance correct.”

If you believe you had contact with a bat or other sick animal, contact your healthcare provider or SWNPHD at 308-345-4223 for more information and guidance. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow SWNPHD on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

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