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CARING FOR NEW MEXICO

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NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Secretary Catherine Torres, M.D.

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Department of Health Confirms Rabies in a Dog from Roosevelt County
Nine people receive rabies vaccine due to exposure to the rabid dog

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health is warning pet and livestock owners in Roosevelt County and the surrounding area to make sure their dogs, cats, horses and other valuable livestock get vaccinated against rabies after an unvaccinated pet dog from near Portales was attacked by an aggressive acting skunk in early July, started showing signs of rabies last week and died at a veterinary hospital two days later.

A veterinarian suspected rabies and sent in diagnostic specimens that tested positive for rabies at the New Mexico Department of Health’s Scientific Laboratory Division in Albuquerque. Family members, including several children, were exposed to the rabid dog’s infectious saliva. Nine people have been identified who will need to receive rabies vaccine to prevent them from developing rabies. Another unvaccinated pet dog that was also bitten by the skunk will need to be destroyed.

“People will need to be treated and vaccinated to prevent them from getting rabies, pets may have to be destroyed, and people have been needlessly exposed to a very dangerous, fatal disease because pets have not been vaccinated against rabies,” Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres said.

Dr. Paul Ettestad, the Department of Health’s public health veterinarian said a skunk positive for rabies means that there are other skunks and potentially other wildlife in the area that also have rabies.

“Pet and horse owners need to protect their animals by having them up-to-date on their rabies vaccines. This will also help to protect their children and other family members from rabies if their horse, dog or cat tangles with a rabid animal,” Dr. Ettestad said.

The following guidelines can help protect you and your family from rabies:

- Keep pets on a leash at all times. Pets should be up-to-date on rabies vaccinations and wearing current license tags on their collar. If your cat or dog has been bitten or scratched, call your pet’s veterinarian, even if the wound is superficial.
- Horses and other valuable livestock should be considered for rabies vaccination also to protect them from wild rabid animals that may attack them.



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- Stay away from wild or unfamiliar animals. Do not attempt to feed, approach, or touch wild animals (alive or dead). Teach this important message to your children, and keep a close eye on your kids at all times.
- If you see a sick or dead wild animal, or a wild animal acting abnormally in this area, report it to your local animal control authorities. Rabid animals may show no fear of people and may even seem friendly or become aggressive.

If you are bitten or scratched by a wild animal or a pet, The Department of Health recommends the following guidelines:

- Wash all wounds and contact areas thoroughly with soap and water.
- Contact your physician immediately for evaluation. The Department of Health is available to physicians for consultation about rabies at (505) 827-0006.
- Call the local animal control department to report the incident; provide them with an accurate description of the animal.
- Try to keep the animal confined, but don't risk further injury if the animal is dangerous.
- Keep children away from all animals involved in the incident

For more information about rabies visit the Department of Health website at <http://nmhealth.org/ERD/HealthData/rabies.shtml>.

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