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For immediate release:  
December 11, 2011

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### **Department of Health Confirms Rabies in 3 Skunks from Carlsbad** *Urges families to vaccinate their animals*

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health is warning pet and livestock owners in Carlsbad and surrounding areas of Eddy County to make sure their dogs, cats, horses and other valuable livestock get vaccinated against rabies after 3 skunks tested positive for rabies in the last week. Five unvaccinated pet dogs that were bitten by the rabid skunks were euthanized to protect family members from potential rabies exposure. No known human exposures to the rabid skunks occurred. There have been 7 rabid skunks and one rabid horse in Eddy County so far in 2011.

“These pets could have been protected if they had been vaccinated against rabies before their exposure to the rabid skunks,” Department of Health Cabinet Secretary Dr. Catherine Torres said. “For the safety of animals and family members we urge everyone to vaccinate their pets and livestock against rabies to avoid exposure to a very dangerous, fatal disease.”

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.
- 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.



Office of the Secretary

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- 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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