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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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Rabies Confirmed in a Skunk from Chaves County
Department of Health urges vaccination of pets and livestock

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health is warning pet and livestock owners in Chaves County and throughout the state to make sure their dogs, cats, horses, and other valuable livestock are vaccinated against rabies after a skunk that was behaving abnormally in Roswell, New Mexico tested positive for the disease.

Animal control is currently investigating possible exposures in the neighborhood where the skunk was found. Currently, no people or animals are known to have been exposed to the skunk.

“In New Mexico, bats, skunks and foxes are reservoirs for rabies and can transmit rabies to people, pets, livestock or other wild animals. We are urging everyone to vaccinate your pets and livestock against rabies; vaccination is one of the most effective public health tools we have to prevent humans from being exposed to rabies,” said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres.

Several skunks from southeastern New Mexico have been diagnosed with rabies. This year, there have been eight rabid animals reported in New Mexico including the rabid skunk in Chavez County, a rabid horse and four rabid skunks in Eddy County, one rabid skunk from Lincoln County, and a rabid dog in Roosevelt County. It is essential for pet owners to vaccinate their pets and to seek veterinary care if any of their pets become ill, especially if they have had contact with any wild animals including skunks.

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

- 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, report it to your local animal control authorities. Rabid animals may show no fear of people and may even seem friendly or become aggressive.
- 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 minor.
- Horse and livestock owners should consider vaccinating their animals against rabies.



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- 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 24/7 at (505) 827-0006.
 - Call the local animal control department to report the incident and provide the department 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's website at <http://nmhealth.org/ERD/HealthData/rabies.shtml>.

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