

For Immediate release:
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Department of Health Confirms Rabies in a Fox from Catron County *Second Fox Attacks Hiker*

(Las Cruces) – The New Mexico Department of Health is warning hikers and pet owners in the Gila National Forest area to use caution because of a wild fox that was confirmed with rabies. Residents should not approach wild animals and pet owners are encouraged to keep their pets on a leash and have their rabies vaccinations up-to-date.

A fox found at Keller Canyon located five miles west of Glenwood has tested positive for rabies. Two dogs were bitten by the fox and had to be euthanized. A second fox that was exhibiting abnormal behavior bit an individual June 19 who was walking along Catwalk Trail National Recreation Area located four miles northeast of Glenwood.

Dr. Paul Ettestad, state public health veterinarian for the New Mexico Department of Health, said fox rabies has been a problem for several decades in Arizona and it appears that it has now spread into western New Mexico. Rabies is a deadly viral disease that can be prevented but not cured.

“This should serve as a wakeup call to people that there are wild foxes in the area infected with rabies, though other wild animals could also become infected,” Ettestad said. “Since pet dogs and cats that roam and hunt can come into contact with rabid animals and potentially transmit it to people, it is very important to make sure all dogs and cats are up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations.”

Gila National Forest officials will be posting warning signs at trailheads in the vicinity. 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.
- 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 or a loved-one are bitten by an animal, or come into contact with an animal’s saliva, wash the exposed site immediately with soap and water. Be sure to report the bite to local animal control and seek medical care as soon as possible.

- If you see a sick or dead wild animal, or a wild animal acting abnormally in this area, report it to New Mexico Department of Game and Fish at (505) 532-2100. Rabid animals may show no fear of people and may even seem friendly or become aggressive.

For more information about rabies call the New Mexico Department of Health at (505) 827-0006, or visit the Department of Health website at <http://www.health.state.nm.us/epi/rabies.html>.