

## **NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN) ALERT**

### **Increase in Rabid Animals in Curry County**

**May 19, 2026**

#### **Background:**

The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) is alerting veterinarians and healthcare workers to a recent increase in rabies positive animals in Curry County. There have been three animals (one unvaccinated dog and two skunks) who tested positive since April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026. By comparison, in 2025 Curry County had two rabid animals (both skunks) for the entire year.

Rabies is a preventable viral disease of mammals most often transmitted to humans through the bite of a rabid animal. Rabies virus infects the central nervous system, causing encephalopathy and ultimately death. Signs and symptoms include aggressiveness, apprehension, headache, fever, malaise, sensory changes, paralysis, hydrophobia, delirium, and convulsions. The incubation period is usually one to three months but can range from less than one week to more than a year. Death occurs in nearly 100% of infected persons.

#### **Recommendations for Veterinarians:**

Veterinarians should work with their clients to ensure all animals are up to date on rabies vaccine. Rabies vaccine is the best method of disease prevention for both animals and humans. Unvaccinated animals exposed to rabies will be required to either be euthanized or subject to a strict four-month quarantine at the owner's expense. Vaccinated animals exposed to a wild or potentially rabid animal should be boosted promptly and observed for 45 days.

State law requires anyone aware of animal bites, including physicians, health offices, veterinarians, and the public, to report them immediately to their local animal control office with a complete description of the biting animal and circumstances of bite.

Any animal that dies or is euthanized within 10 days of biting a human must be tested at NMDOH's Scientific Laboratory Division (SLD), regardless of vaccine status. Specimens must be properly packaged, kept cold but not frozen, and submitted with a complete NMDOH SLD submission form.

Any wild animals who seem ill or exhibit unusual behaviors (which may include but are not limited to: daytime activity in nocturnal animals, staggering, paralysis, excessive drooling, and/or foaming at the mouth), should be reported to New Mexico Game and Fish at 1-888-248-6866.

## **Recommendations for Healthcare Workers:**

Healthcare workers evaluating patients with animal bites or potential rabies exposures should immediately perform thorough wound cleaning, assess the type and severity of the exposure, and determine the need for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis. NMDOH is available for consultation on PEP administration at 1-833-796-8773. For high-risk exposures, such as bites by suspected rabid animals, raccoons, skunks, wild carnivores, or bats, PEP initiation should begin immediately. Any skin contact with a live bat should be evaluated, even if no bite is recognized. If the animal is available for testing, PEP administration may be deferred pending test results.

Rabies PEP for individuals who have not previously received rabies vaccine includes administration of Human Rabies Immunoglobulin (HRIG) infiltrated into the wound site (as much as anatomically feasible) with any remaining volume administered intramuscularly at a site different from vaccine administration, along with a four-dose rabies vaccine series administered on day 0,3,7, and 14.

Immunocompromised individuals should receive a fifth vaccine dose on day 28. Persons previously vaccinated against rabies should not receive HRIG and should instead receive two rabies vaccine doses on days 0 and 3.

Healthcare providers should also assess the need for tetanus prophylaxis and antibiotics when indicated.

NMDOH is available for consultation on PEP administration at 1-833-796-8773.

## **Additional Resources:**

NMDOH rabies website: <https://www.nmhealth.org/about/erd/ideb/zdp/rab/>

NMDOH Scientific Laboratory rabies submission form: <https://www.nmhealth.org/publication/view/form/952/>

NMDOH Scientific Laboratory rabies procedures for shipping: <https://www.nmhealth.org/publication/view/guide/951/>

CDC rabies website: <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html>  
[Human Rabies Prevention --- United States, 2008 Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](#)

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5703a1.htm>

Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control: <https://www.nasphv.org/Documents/NASPHVRabiesCompendium.pdf>

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**New Mexico Health Alert Network**: To register for the NM Health Alert Network, please visit the following site <https://nm.readyop.com/fs/4cjZ/10b2> Please fill out the registration form completely and click Submit at the bottom of the page, to begin receiving Important health alerts, advisories, and updates.

**Please Note** that our system also utilizes text messaging to notify members of important health information. Due to FCC Regulation changes that are designed to decrease the amount of unwanted spam text messages sent each year to citizens, please save, this phone number **(855) 596-1810** as the **“New Mexico Health Alert Network”** default phone number for your account used for text messages on the mobile device(s) you register with us.