



For Immediate release:
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Contact: Chris Minnick, Department of Health
Office: 575-528-5197, Cell: 649-0754
Dan Williams, Department of Game and Fish
Office: 505-476-8004

Department of Health Confirms Rabies in a Fox from Silver City Owners Urged to Vaccinate Their Pets and Horses

(Las Cruces) – A fox found nearly dead on a driveway on F Street in Silver City has tested positive for rabies. No known human or pet exposures were reported. The New Mexico Department of Health is urging pet and livestock owners in Silver City and surrounding areas to protect their dogs, cats, horses and other valuable livestock by getting them vaccinated against rabies.

A New Mexico Department of Game and Fish officer picked up the fox late last Saturday night after residents of the home called. The fox tested positive at the Department of Health's Scientific Laboratory in Albuquerque.

The first rabies-positive fox in New Mexico was found in June of 2007 in the Glenwood area. The Department of Health has confirmed that seven foxes from that area have had rabies since then. Other animals that have tested positive for rabies were a fox and a bobcat from Reserve in late December, a dog from Mule Creek in January and a fox from the Mangas Springs area in early February.

More than 10 people have received rabies vaccine because of exposure to the rabid animals. Several pet dogs have been euthanized because they were not vaccinated against rabies and were bitten by a rabid fox.

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

“Since June of last year, we have seen fox rabies steadily progress north, south and east from the Glenwood area,” 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.”

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

- 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 (575) 532-2100 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, or anytime at (505) 827-9376. Rabid animals may show no fear of people and may 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 superficial.
- Horses and other valuable livestock should be considered for rabies vaccination 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.
- 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.

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