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Department of Health Confirms Rabies in a Dog from Grant County *Five people receive rabies vaccine due to exposure to the rabid dog*

(Santa Fe) – Several pet dogs in Grant and Catron counties have had to be euthanized because they were not vaccinated against rabies and were bitten by rabid animals in the past few months. The New Mexico Department of Health is urging pet and livestock owners in those counties to protect their dogs, cats, horses and possibly other valuable livestock by getting them vaccinated against rabies.

Rabies in wild foxes has been found as far north as Reserve and as far south as Mule Creek. Eight foxes have tested positive for rabies since June with the majority of them from the Glenwood area. A bobcat and a fox from the Reserve area tested positive for rabies in late December.

An unvaccinated dog from the Mule Creek area was bitten by an aggressive acting fox more than a month ago. The dog started showing signs of rabies in early January, biting its owner and exposing several other people who had contact with the dog's saliva in open wounds. The dog became very ill and had to be euthanized. It tested positive for rabies at the Department of Health's Scientific Laboratory in Albuquerque. Five people who were exposed to the dog have received rabies vaccine at a cost of more than \$1,000 per person.

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 can be prevented but not cured.

"Thousands of dollars have been spent, several dogs have had to be destroyed, and several people have been needlessly exposed to a very dangerous disease because pets have not been vaccinated against rabies," 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."

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.

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- 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 seem friendly or become aggressive.

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>.

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