



New Mexico WILDLIFE NEWS



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ANOTHER SILVER CITY FOX TESTS POSITIVE FOR RABIES; CATWALK FOX BITES WOMAN

SILVER CITY -- The Department of Game and Fish and the Department of Health are urging pet and livestock owners in southwestern New Mexico to vaccinate their animals against rabies after two more encounters with aggressive foxes this week.

On Monday, a woman was walking her dog in Silver City when a sick-looking fox approached the dog and hissed at it. The fox was collected by a Game Department officer and tested positive for rabies Tuesday. The dog had been vaccinated for rabies. The fox was the second rabid fox reported in Silver City in the past month. There have been four foxes and one dog positive for rabies in Grant County so far this year. Eight foxes and one bobocat tested positive in Catron County in 2007.

On Tuesday, a 19-year-old woman was attacked and bitten by a fox on the Catwalk National Scenic Trail near Glenwood. The fox ran away and could not be found. The woman said the fox had to be kicked off her pant leg after it jumped up and bit her. She received rabies vaccine as a precaution.

"These recent incidents and positive rabies tests show just how important it is for everyone to keep their animals up to date on rabies vaccinations," said Kerry Mower, wildlife health specialist with the Department of Game and Fish. "It is very easy for domestic animals to come in contact with rabid wild animals and then transmit the disease to humans."

Department of Health officials said fox rabies has been a problem for several decades in Arizona and now has spread into western New Mexico. Rabies is a deadly viral disease that affects all mammals and can be prevented but not cured.

"People need to avoid all wild animals as several species carry rabies," said Dr. Paul Ettestad, state public health veterinarian at the Department of Health. "If you are bitten by a wild animal seek medical attention immediately."

The Department of Game and Fish collects protected animals that are sick or dead and has them tested for rabies if the animals have been exposed to humans or are considered a potential health risk to humans. This year, Department officers have received several reports of dead foxes in the Silver City-Glenwood area.

Here are some guidelines to help protect yourself 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. Rabid animals may show no fear of people and may seem friendly or become aggressive.
- Pets should be up-to-date on rabies vaccinations and wearing current license tags on their collar.
- Horses and other valuable livestock should be considered for rabies vaccination to protect them from wild rabid animals that may attack them.

- 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.
- Keep pets on a leash at all times.
- If your cat or dog has been bitten or scratched, call your pet's veterinarian, even if the wound is superficial.
- If you see a sick or dead wild animal, or a wild animal acting abnormally, report it to the 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.

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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