

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Secretary Alfredo Vigil, MD

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Dept. of Health Confirms Rabies in a Calf from Socorro County and Fox from Grant County

Pet and Livestock Owners Encouraged to Vaccinate Their Animals

(Las Cruces) -- The New Mexico Department of Health confirmed today that a calf from Socorro County and a fox from Grant County both tested positive for rabies. The fox was found about 10 miles south of the town of Glenwood near the Catron County line while the calf was from a ranch about 10 miles east of Datil.

To help prevent the spread of rabies the Department of Health is encouraging all pet and livestock owners to vaccinate their dogs, cats, horses and other valuable livestock against the disease.

“The confirmation of rabies in a calf shows that rabies can spread into other animal species and be a threat to people, their pets and livestock,” said Dr. Paul Ettestad, public health veterinarian for the Department of Health. “Vaccination of pets and valuable livestock is crucial in protecting your family and your animals.”

Ettestad said that tissue specimens from the calf will be sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta to determine the strain of rabies that infected it. Fox rabies has been a problem in Arizona for decades and was first detected in New Mexico in the Glenwood area of Catron County in 2007. Rabies is a fatal disease that can be prevented with vaccination, but not cured once it has been diagnosed.

So far this year, Grant County has had six foxes, two bobcats and a coyote test positive for rabies while Socorro County had a bat from near Dusty test positive for rabies in July.

The Department of Health recommends the following guidelines to help protect against rabies:

- If you see a sick or dead wild animal or a wild animal that is acting abnormally in this area, report it to the 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.
- 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. 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.

So far in 2009 there has been a total of 20 animals test positive for rabies in New Mexico. In 2008 there were 28 cases of rabies in New Mexico, including 18 foxes and one dog in the southwestern area of New Mexico. There were 14 foxes and one dog with rabies in Grant County, two foxes in Catron County and one fox each in Sierra and Hidalgo Counties.

For more information about rabies, including a map of animal rabies cases by county, visit the Department of Health website at <http://www.nmhealth.org/epi/rabies.html>.

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