

**For Immediate Release**

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Contact: Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223

## **First Rabies Case for 2017 in Southwest Nebraska**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has confirmed the first positive rabies case in Nebraska for the year. "In 2016, a total of 19 confirmed rabies cases occurred in Nebraska," states Melissa Propp, RN, Surveillance Coordinator at SWNPHD. "Southwest Nebraska had recorded 16% of the states total. We had 25% of the state cases in 2015 and continue to be an area of elevated concern."

This case of rabies involves a skunk and is located in Furnas County. "Rabies is a deadly virus infection that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals," explains Propp. People get rabies from the bite of an animal with rabies. Any wild mammal, like a raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote, or bat, can have rabies and transmit it to people. According to the Center for Disease Control, rabies is a medical emergency. Any wounds should be immediately washed with soap and water. They should also receive medical attention from a health care professional.

"Vaccination is the best protection for keeping your pets safe," states Propp. "We recommend that residents contact their local veterinarian to make sure your pet's vaccinations are current. In addition, please be careful around stray or strange animals. If an animal bites you, and it is safe to do so, catch the animal and contact your veterinarian for testing. It may save you the pain and cost of Rabies Vaccinations."

Animals with rabies may act differently from healthy animals. Wild animals may move slowly or may act as if they are tame. A pet that is usually friendly may snap at you or may try to bite. If you are around an animal which displays any of the below signs of rabies, move yourself and others to safety.

- aggression
- increased drooling
- problems swallowing
- general sickness
- changes in an animal's behavior

If you discover a dead wild animal that may have infected your pets:

- Remove the animal from the area by using a shovel, wearing gloves and placing carcass in a plastic bag
- Wash your hands in soap and water after taking off your gloves
- Avoid direct contact between the carcass and the person
- Disinfect tools, cages, gloves and other surfaces potentially contaminated with saliva, nervous tissue or blood with a 10 percent solution of household bleach in water

Contact your local veterinarian and public health department in regards to rabies testing and exposures.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. For more information call Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223 or email [nurse@swhealth.ne.gov](mailto:nurse@swhealth.ne.gov) . SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, McCook – one block north of Arby's and 501 Broadway, Imperial – entrance on 5<sup>th</sup> Street. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook.com/swnphd and Twitter@swpublichealth.

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