

**For Immediate Release**

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

## **Outbreak of Rabies Continues in SW and Central Nebraska**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has confirmed the sixth positive rabies case in southwest Nebraska. "This is the 9<sup>th</sup> week in a row that we have had to follow-up on a rabies case. The growing number of rabies cases is becoming a huge concern," states Melissa Propp, RN, Surveillance Coordinator at SWNPHD. "This outbreak does not appear to be breaking anytime soon."

This case is located in Hitchcock County while previous cases were located in Dundy and Hitchcock County. A total of 20 confirmed cases have occurred in Nebraska, making southwest Nebraska a significant area of concern.

Additionally, Two Rivers Public Health Department (TRPHD) and SWNPHD jointly worked one of the 20 confirmed cases. "We recommend that residents contact their local veterinarian to make sure your pet's vaccinations are current," explains Marsha Carlson, RN, Surveillance Coordinator at TRPHD. "Vaccination is the best protection for keeping your pets safe. In addition, please be especially wary of 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."

Rabies is a deadly virus infection that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. 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 and receive medical attention from a health care professional.

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. Some signs of rabies in animals are:

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

If you are around an animal which displays any of the above signs of rabies, move yourself and others to safety.

**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. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, McCook – one block north of Arby's. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook.com/swnphd and Twitter@swpublichealth.

Two Rivers Public Health Department serves Buffalo, Dawson, Franklin, Gosper, Harlan, Kearney and Phelps counties. For more information call Marsha Carlson, RN at 308-995-4778. TRPHD is located at 701 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1 Holdrege. You can also follow TRPHD on Facebook.com/two-rivers-public-health-department and Twitter@trpublichealth.

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