

For Immediate Release

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Veterinarian Clinics Sharing Updated Rabies Information

Veterinarians and Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) are joining forces to help educate area residents about rabies. Free rabies materials are now available at area vet clinics that can be very helpful in protecting people and their animals.

“Vaccination is the best protection for keeping your pets safe,” states Dave Baltzell, DVM in Ogallala. “We recommend that residents contact their local veterinarian to make sure your pet’s vaccinations are current. In addition, please be careful around stray, wild or strange animals, particularly skunks, raccoons and bats. If an animal bites you, and it is safe to do so, catch the animal and contact your veterinarian for testing, otherwise a description and/or a photograph for authorities may suffice. Testing of the animal may save you the pain and cost of Rabies Vaccinations.”

“In 2015, a total of 28 confirmed rabies cases occurred in Nebraska,” states Myra Stoney, Director at SWNPHD. Southwest Nebraska recorded 25% of the states total and already has two confirmed cases in 2016 to lead the state again. “Our educational materials are for various ages at the vet clinics,” explains Stoney. “We encourage you to ask your vet questions about protecting your pets from rabies.”

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

“Rabies is a deadly virus infection that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals,” explains SWNPHD Surveillance Coordinator Melissa Propp, RN. 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.

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

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