



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Two Confirmed Rabies Cases in Yuma County

Sterling, Colo. – June 8, 2020: There have been two confirmed cases of rabies in Yuma County, a goat and a skunk. The Northeast Colorado Health Department (NCHD) wants to remind everyone about the importance of vaccinating your animals against rabies because once symptoms start, rabies is nearly always fatal. If your pet has not been vaccinated for rabies and encounters a confirmed rabid animal, the recommendation is euthanasia for your pet. Vaccinating your pet is the first line of defense in protecting your entire family from coming into contact with this deadly disease.

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals, resulting in a fatal disease. The most common route of rabies transmission is from the bite or scratch of a rabid animal; however, transmission can also occur through contact with saliva or nervous system tissue of a rabid animal through the eyes, nose, mouth or an open cut or wound.

If your pet is attacked by another animal it is important to secure your pet and call your veterinarian right away. It is best to wear gloves and long sleeves when handling your pet after an attack. Barehanded contact with saliva is a potential exposure to rabies, especially if you have any cuts on your hands or arms. The rabies virus is carried in the saliva but once it has dried the virus is no longer considered viable or capable of infecting a person or animal. It is also recommended that you wait at least 30 minutes or until the saliva has dried before you handle your pet or bathe them.

NCHD would like to remind everyone to be careful as we move into the summer months when we tend to see an increase in pet and human exposure to rabid animals. Much of the rabies exposures in northeast Colorado have been from skunks. However, rabies can be transmitted to any warm-blooded animal and can often be found in raccoons, coyotes, foxes, feral cats and bats. Signs of rabies in animals include abnormal behavior like being active in the day for nocturnal species, approaching humans or other animals, aggressive behavior, difficulty walking and unusual vocalization.

The most effective way to prevent possible exposure to rabies is by keeping your pet's vaccinations up to date. Always leave wildlife alone, especially ill or injured animals and do not take in or feed stray animals, including feral cats. If you suspect a family member or pet has potentially been exposed to rabies, contact your medical provider or your pet's veterinarian immediately. For more information, visit <https://www.nchd.org/rabies> or call 970-522-3741.