

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT



1555 North 17th Avenue
Greeley, CO 80631



www.weldhealth.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 15, 2017

Contact: Public Information Officer
(970) 400-2380

Puppy in Altercation with Skunk Tests Positive for Rabies

Weld County, Colorado – A rabid skunk near rural Hudson is suspected of attacking a puppy, resulting in the spread of rabies to the dog. The puppy came in contact with four other dogs and six people in Weld, and five others outside of Weld County. Colorado State University lab testing on May 10 confirmed rabies in the puppy and the dogs and people are receiving post-exposure preventative rabies treatment. There are no other exposure concerns for the public or other animals from this Hudson case. The four dogs will be monitored over the next 120 days. "The best protection against rabies is to avoid contact with wild animals and keep your pets vaccinated," said Mark E. Wallace, MD, MPH, Executive Director of the Weld County Health Department. "If your pet is too young to be vaccinated, do not allow it to be outside unsupervised."

Any mammal, including humans, is at risk for contracting rabies. "The risk of human exposure to rabies increases when pets and domestic animals are not properly vaccinated. If you are in direct contact with a rabid animal, such as a skunk or bat, your risk is much higher," said Wallace. Rabies can infect many wild animals, including foxes, raccoons, coyotes, and bats. Health officials recommend all domestic animals such as cats, dogs, horses and livestock be vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian.

Signs of rabies include increases in saliva and drooling, nocturnal animals seen out during the daytime, slow or difficult movement, and confusion or aggression. Rabies is a disease caused by a virus that affects the nervous system. Rabies causes inflammation of the brain and spinal cord and is nearly always fatal. It is transmitted in saliva through the bite of an infected animal. The virus can also be transmitted in saliva to an open cut, scratch or wound. If a person suspects they have been exposed to rabies, they should contact their medical provider immediately. Effective vaccination treatment is available to prevent rabies if started before symptoms appear.

To prevent exposure to rabies:

- Do not feed, touch or handle wild animals and be cautious of stray dogs and cats
- Have dogs, cats, horses, and livestock vaccinated regularly by a licensed veterinarian
- Spay or neuter pets to reduce the number of unwanted or stray animals in the neighborhood
- Do not feed wild animals or keep pet food outside, which may attract wild animals

For an interactive map of identified rabies in Weld County, visit:

https://www.weldgov.com/departments/health_and_environment/environmental_health/animal_related_diseases/rabies_surveillance/

###

