

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT



1555 North 17th Avenue
Greeley, CO 80631



www.weldhealth.org



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 22, 2018

Contact: Public Information Officer
(970) 400-2380

Two Skunks Test Positive for Rabies--One Near Downtown Greeley

Weld County, Colorado – Two skunks in Weld County have tested positive for rabies. The first skunk attacked a group of chickens in daylight and was shot and killed by a rural Keenesburg homeowner. The second skunk was picked up by an Animal Control officer after it was found acting strangely in daylight and in a highly populated area of 3rd Street and 9th Avenue, near downtown Greeley. “We are concerned about any human or pet exposure with the Greeley skunk,” said Mark E. Wallace, MD, MPH, Executive Director of the Weld County Health Department. “Because of the density of people and pets in the area, we are requesting that any person who feels that they or their pet may have had contact with the skunk, please contact the Health Department.”

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

To report any human or pet interaction with a skunk, please call: (970) 304-6415. 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/

###