

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT



1555 North 17th Avenue
Greeley, CO 80631



www.weldhealth.org



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Public Information Officer
(970) 400-2380

Ten Skunks and One Bat Test Positive for Rabies

Weld County, Colorado – Ten skunks tested positive for rabies in nearly all corners of Weld County. Rabid skunks have been found near Ault, Briggsdale, Gill, Greeley, Hudson, and Windsor. A rabid bat was also found near Windsor. Currently, over 160 skunks in 2018 have tested positive for rabies throughout Colorado. "This looks like a year for high rabies exposure in wild animals. 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. "Rabies is nearly always fatal if left untreated."

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 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. Medicine is available to prevent rabies if started before symptoms appear.

To prevent and reduce 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
- Do not feed wild animals or keep pet food outside, which may attract wild animals
- Spay or neuter pets to reduce the number of unwanted or stray animals in the neighborhood

The Humane Society of Weld County has low cost vaccination clinics on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month from 1:30-3:30 PM. For more, visit: <https://www.weldcountyhumane.org/veterinary-services>

For a 2018 interactive map of identified rabies in Weld County, visit:

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

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