

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT



1555 North 17th Avenue  
Greeley, CO 80631



[www.weldhealth.org](http://www.weldhealth.org)



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Public Information Officer  
(970) 400-2380

### Five Skunks Test Positive for Rabies in Northern Weld County

**Weld County, Colorado** – In recent months, five skunks have tested positive for rabies near the towns of Severance, Pierce, and Grover. Some animal and human exposures have occurred, and they all are receiving treatment. Four people are receiving post exposure prophylaxis after handling their pets which encountered the skunks. A total of 14 dogs were also exposed. Health officials continue to educate the public about preventing rabies exposure. "Rabies can infect any mammal," said Mark E. Wallace, MD, MPH, Executive Director of the Weld County Health Department. "A regular vaccine is the best defense for pets and large domestic animals."

In past years, domestic bison and horses have contracted rabies, in addition to a variety of wildlife. "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
- Be cautious if wild animals suddenly appear friendly or are walking or behaving erratically
- If your pet is in a fight with a wild animal, care should be taken in handling your pet until it is given a bath and any blood or saliva is washed off. Human rabies exposure may occur from the saliva left on your pet from the wild animal.

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

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