



For Immediate Release: March 22, 2019

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First Tri-County Health Department Area Rabies-Positive Skunk of 2019 Found in Adams County

Tri-County Health encourages everyone to vaccinate pets and livestock to prevent exposure to rabies.

A skunk in the Town of Bennett in Adams County, Colorado, tested positive for rabies March 17, 2019. This is the first animal to test positive for rabies in 2019 in the Tri-County Health Department area of Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties. The rabid skunk had a scuffle with a resident's dog. Fortunately, the dog is up to date on its rabies vaccine and is receiving necessary veterinary attention. Jefferson County also had its first positive skunk this week.

Rabies is most often found in bats, skunks and raccoons in the area, but also can be found in foxes and other wild mammals. In 2018, 325 Colorado wild animals tested positive for rabies. Twelve of the 325 rabies positive animals were located in Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties and included seven bats, four skunks and one alpaca. Multiple domestic pets and humans were exposed to the deadly virus.

Rabies is spread primarily by saliva through the bite of a rabid animal. Once symptoms of rabies infection appear, there is no cure and the infection is almost always fatal. People that have been exposed to rabies can receive treatment to prevent illness. For pets and livestock, routine rabies vaccination is the best way to protect animals from infection. Animal vaccination regimens vary so livestock and pet owners are urged to discuss the vaccine with their local veterinarian.

In addition to ensuring that pets and livestock are vaccinated against rabies, here are additional prevention steps:

- Be aware of bats, skunks and raccoons out during the day. This is abnormal behavior and these animals should be avoided.
- Be aware of areas that can be suitable habitat for skunks such as dark holes, under buildings, and under equipment.
- Do not feed wild animals or allow your pets around them.
- Be sure to teach children to stay away from wild animals.
- Avoid leaving pet food outside as that may attract a wild animal.
- Contact your veterinarian right away, if any of your animals are bitten or scratched by any wild animal, particularly skunks, bats, foxes or raccoons.
- If your animals exhibit any dramatic behavioral changes, contact your veterinarian as soon as possible. Isolate and avoid contact with these animals if possible.
- If you have been bitten or scratched by a wild animal, contact your physician and local health department right away.

Immediately report a suspicious or dead animal or an animal bite to Tri-County Health Department at 303-220-9200 or your local health department. For more information about rabies, please visit <https://www.tchd.org/rabies>.

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Tri-County Health Department serves over 1.5 million people in Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties. It provides over 60 programs and services including birth certificates, immunizations, food/WIC, restaurant

inspections, family planning, STI/HIV Testing and infectious disease investigations. For more information, please visit www.tchd.org or follow us on Twitter @TCHDHealth or Facebook @cotchd