



*“Protecting and Promoting Public Health and  
Environmental Quality in the Community through  
People, Prevention & Partnerships”*

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## **More Rabid Skunks Found in El Paso County** Health Officials Warn Public to Vaccinate Pets, Avoid Wildlife

**Colorado Springs, CO**—A total of six skunks infected with rabies have been reported in El Paso County as of August 31, 2009, according to the El Paso County Department of Health and Environment. “Early this month we announced three rabid skunks had been reported in El Paso County, now we have a total of six,” said Kandi Buckland, M.P.A., public health director with the El Paso County Department of Health and Environment. These findings serve as another alert to the public that pets and livestock must be properly vaccinated. “Pet and livestock owners need to take precautions and vaccinate their animals against rabies if they haven’t done so already. Parents should also remind their children to avoid feeding, petting or touching wildlife as well,” Buckland adds.

Prior to this summer the last time a rabid skunk was reported in El Paso County was 1970. Here are the following locations of where the rabid skunks were found: 1) from north central El Paso County along the boundary with Elbert County; 2) from the town of Peyton; 3) just east of the intersection of Highway 83 and county line road, along the southern edge of Douglas; 4) near Powers, just east of highway 83; 5) near Eastonville along Latigo Boulevard; 6) near Black Forest.

Undervaccinated pets are at significant risk for acquiring rabies from skunks, which then may bring the risk for rabies exposure into the home. The state’s data base currently shows as of Jan. 1, 2009, 26 skunks infected with rabies have been reported in Colorado; in 2008, 18 were reported.

Rabies is a viral disease in mammals—including people. Rabies infects the brain and other parts of the central nervous system, causing brain swelling and damage, and ultimately, death. Rabies is spread primarily through the bite of rabid animals, resulting in the spread of the disease through their infected saliva. Rabies also can be spread when saliva from an infected animal gets into open wounds, cuts or enters through membranes of the eyes, nose, or mouth.

No cure exists for rabies once symptoms appear. Preventive medication is available for people known or suspected to have been bitten by a rabid animal. It is critically important for people bitten or scratched by a wild animal or an unfamiliar animal to contact their health care provider.

**In addition to ensuring that pets and livestock are vaccinated properly against rabies, the Health Department recommends these prevention steps:**

- Don't feed wild animals or allow your pets around them. Be sure to teach children to stay away from wild mammals.
- Contact your veterinarian if your dog or cat is bitten or scratched by a wild animal, such as skunks, bats, foxes or raccoons.
- If you suspect you've been exposed to rabies, contact your physician without delay.
- Discuss rabies vaccination of your livestock with your veterinarian. Vaccination should be considered for horses and other equines, breeding livestock, dairy cattle or other high-value livestock.
- If you observe a wild mammal acting strangely, especially a skunk, or if you find a dead skunk that isn't on your property, stay away from it. Strange behavior for a skunk would include being out and about during daytime hours.
- If you must remove a dead skunk on your property, wear rubber gloves or lift the carcass with a shovel or other tool, and double-bag it for the trash.

For more information, visit [www.elpasocountyhealth.org](http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org).

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