



**El Paso County Department
of Health and Environment**
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NEWS

For Immediate Release

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Fox Tests Positive for Rabies in El Paso County

El Paso County, CO—A fox in the Woodmoor North neighborhood just south of the Douglas county line tested positive for rabies Friday, April 23, according to the El Paso County Department of Health and Environment. This is the first rabid fox in Colorado to be reported in 2010. Thirty animals in Colorado have tested positive for rabies so far this year, including four from El Paso County.

The Division of Wildlife (DOW) responded to a call regarding the fox acting unusual and having difficulty walking outside of a home. DOW captured and euthanized the fox for testing. According to DOW, the fox appeared quite ill and had clinical signs suggestive of rabies.

While rabies is most commonly found in bats, people and pets should avoid contact with skunks and other wild animals such as foxes or raccoons, since these animals may be rabid.

It is critical that pets be vaccinated against rabies. “Un-or-undervaccinated dogs and cats that are exposed to rabies have an extremely high chance of getting infected and dying from the disease. These pets also pose a tremendous risk to humans because they can bring rabies into the home,” said Kandi Buckland, R.N., M.P.A., executive director of the El Paso County Department of Health and Environment.

Rabies is spread primarily through the bite of rabid mammals and is almost always fatal. “This fox is likely to have been infected by a rabid skunk, so we continue to see rabies infection spillover into different mammal species in our county. We urge you to keep your pets up to date with rabies vaccinations and to take all the necessary rabies prevention measures to protect your family,” Buckland said.

“Leaving pet food outside will attract wildlife. We ask that you keep pet food away and make it inaccessible to wildlife, Buckland added.

In 2010 so far, El Paso County has identified rabies in three skunks and one fox. In 2009, rabies was detected in eight skunks, a fox, horse and mountain lion. Prior to 2009, El Paso County last reported a rabid skunk in 1974.

Here are some key rabies prevention steps:

- Ensure that dogs, cats and ferrets are vaccinated properly against rabies by a licensed veterinarian. Also, discuss vaccinating horses and other livestock with your veterinarian.
- Don't feed wild animals or allow your pets around them. Teach children to stay away from wild mammals. Do not keep pet food outside as that may attract wild animals.
- Protect all pets, particularly animals too young to be vaccinated, from contact with wild animals. Puppies and kittens can be vaccinated for rabies as early as 4 months old.
- Contact your veterinarian if your dog or cat is bitten or scratched by wild animals, such as skunks, bats, foxes or raccoons.
- If you or a family member has been bitten by a wild animal or a domestic animal unknown to you, contact your physician and the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region without delay.
- If you see a skunk during daylight hours that is acting abnormally, such as stumbling or acting overly aggressive, make sure you keep children and pets away from the animal and call the Division of Wildlife to report the location.
- To remove a dead skunk on your property, do not touch the animal. Remove the carcass with a shovel or other tool, and double bag it for the trash.
- Take steps to bat proof your home.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environments updates their Web site every Friday with rabies data at www.cdphe.state.co.us/dc/zoonosis/rabies/

Go to www.elpasocountyhealth.org for more information about rabies.

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