



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

For Immediate Release

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Rabies Shot Clinic Planned to Raise Awareness

El Paso County, CO—In an effort to remind pet owners to protect their pets and their families from rabies, a rabies vaccination clinic is scheduled from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday, April 24, at Big R in Falcon, 14155 E. U.S. Highway 24.

Dogs and cats will be vaccinated by licensed veterinarians for \$5 each, or a maximum charge of \$20 per family. A brief wellness exam is included.

The clinic and accompanying public education campaign has been prompted by an unprecedented rise in rabies among skunks in El Paso County and statewide, and by the critical nature of rabies—almost always fatal once symptoms begin. The rabies vaccination clinic is co-sponsored by the El Paso County Department of Health and Environment, El Paso County and the Colorado Springs Area Veterinary Society. Veterinarians, veterinary technicians and many others are volunteering their time to make this event possible.

Rabies vaccine will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis, and supplies are limited. The clinic will close at 5 p.m. or as soon as vaccine supplies are exhausted.

Important information for pet owners attending the clinic:

- Dogs and cats must be on leashes or in carriers.
- Bring shot records if you have them—no requirement.
- **The clinic will accept cash only—please bring small bills.**

Vaccination of cats and dogs is particularly critical now because rabies is at epidemic levels among skunks and disease is spreading to other wild animals and to pets. In 2009, 13 rabid animals were recorded in El Paso County, including eight skunks, a fox, a horse, a mountain lion and two bats. Already in 2010, El Paso County has recorded three rabid skunks; the 25 rabid animals statewide so far in 2010 include skunks and a cat.

“This resurgence of rabies in skunks is concerning because skunks often encounter dogs and cats,” said Kandi Buckland, R.N., M.P.A., executive director of the El Paso County Department of Health and Environment. “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,” Buckland said.

“Our goal of the one-day clinic is to raise awareness about the importance of rabies vaccination in pets and livestock,” said Dr. Cor VanderWel, D.V.M., president of the Colorado

Springs Area Veterinary Society. “Rabies vaccinations must be given regularly, every year or every three years, depending on the vaccine used and should be administered by a licensed veterinarian.”

“Vaccination is a simple and effective way to protect your pets—and your family—from this deadly disease,” VanderWel said.

The rabid skunks and other animals in El Paso County have been found mostly in northern and eastern areas, but some rabid animals have been found within Colorado Springs city limits, and the Health Department cautions the public that the threat is present anywhere in the county.

While rabies is most common in bat populations, people and pets are more likely to come into contact with rabid skunks and other infected wild animals such as foxes or raccoons.

Rabies is spread primarily through the bite of rabid mammals. Birds, reptiles and amphibians don’t get rabies.

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 equines 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.

For more information, visit www.elpasocountyhealth.org