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News Release

"We work together to build and maintain a community of the highest quality for present and future generations."

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City of Abilene Receives Notice of Positive Rabies Result

ABILENE, Texas - The Texas Department of State Health Services advised Abilene Animal Services on January 19, 2017, that one skunk submitted for analysis tested positive for rabies. The skunk was found near the 2900 Block of Palm in Abilene. The known individuals and animals with possible exposure have been identified and addressed.

Rabies is a deadly virus that affects the central nervous system. The virus is spread through the saliva of infected animals, so humans and animals can be infected through the bite of a rabid animal or by the saliva from such an animal contacting their mucous membranes or an open wound. Such contact with a rabid animal can only be treated through a series of shots administered by a healthcare professional.

"The discovery of one rabid skunk is not cause for alarm, but it highlights the importance of making sure that our pets are current on their rabies vaccine," said Animal Services Director Mirenda Walden. "Pet vaccination is the most effective means of protecting your pet and your family from this disease."

To aid in the prevention of rabies, it is critical for people not to handle common rabies carriers such as bats, skunks, and raccoons along with other wild animals as any mammal can become infected with the rabies virus. Anyone that is bitten by a domestic animal or bitten or scratched by a wild animal must immediately contact a healthcare professional for a rabies risk assessment instead of waiting for symptoms to develop; once symptoms are present, the virus may be untreatable.

All animal bites must be reported to local animal control authorities in order that the biting animal can be quarantined or tested for rabies.

Signs of rabies in animals include abnormal behavior such as nocturnal animals being active during the day, approaching humans or other animals, difficulty with movement, and unusual sounds. Healthy animals usually avoid human contact; a wild animal that allows you to approach or handle it is likely ill or injured and will bite in self-defense. Suspicious animal activity and suspected rabid animals should be reported immediately to Abilene Animal Services at 698-0085.

Abilene Animal Services offers these tips concerning exposure to rabies:

- Do not feed wild animals - this just brings them closer to your family.
- Teach children to stay away from wild or deceased animals.

- Do not allow pets to roam freely, as free-roaming increases their chance of exposure without your knowledge.
- Keep your pet's rabies vaccination current.
- Immediately contact a veterinarian if your pet is bitten or scratched by a wild animal.
- People with possible rabies exposure should consult with a physician without delay.
- Report all animal bites to animal control authorities; the biting animal must be quarantined or tested for rabies.

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