



Wichita Falls-Wichita County Public Health District

1700 Third St. | Wichita Falls, TX 76301 | 940-761-7800 | www.health.wichitafallstx.gov

May 06, 2021

Two Positive Rabies Case in Burkburnett; Total of 3 for Wichita County in 2021

The Wichita Falls – Wichita County Public Health District has been notified that two animals have tested positive for rabies. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) advised that an 8-month old calf was sold to an individual in another county in Texas, from an individual residing in Burkburnett. After being sold, the calf began exhibiting symptoms of rabies and subsequently died. There is no known exposure while the calf was still in Burkburnett. The second animal to test positive was a skunk that was found in downtown Burkburnett in daylight hours. An Animal Control Officer collected the animal and it was sent for testing which resulted positive.

This is the third animal in Wichita County to test positive for rabies. The first rabies case was reported in Wichita Falls on April 16, 2021. The Health District and the Burkburnett Police Department have been in communication about this rising trend and would like to remind citizens to be cautious and informed. Burkburnett Police Department Administration is currently taking direction and leadership from Health District experts on best practice protocols and remedies to support public safety operations in response to this concern.

Most wild animals are not infected with rabies but residents should always keep in mind that wild animals, by nature, are unpredictable and can carry disease. Any exposure to wild animals, alive or dead, in particularly, bats, raccoons, skunks, coyotes and foxes (which are the top five carriers of the virus in Texas) should be avoided.

Children and pets should be watched closely while outdoors to ensure that they do not come in contact with or touch wild animals. If a wild animal strays onto your property, bring children and pets indoors, alert anyone else who may be in the vicinity and let the animal wander away.

Citizens are urged to call their local Animal Control if they observe a wild or domestic animal who is active during the day, appearing sick, fearless or aggressive. There should be no attempt by a citizen to capture or shoot the animal; it cannot be tested if shot in the head. Be aware that rabies can only be transmitted by saliva. Exposure may occur if scratched by an infected animal or whenever saliva enters an open cut or mucous membrane (nose, mouth, eyes).

Rabies is 100% preventable by following a few important guidelines:

- Ensure all pets: dogs, cats and ferrets, are current on their rabies vaccinations, as required by Texas State Law. Livestock owners are also encouraged to vaccinate horses and other livestock.
- Don't let pets roam free.
- Stay away from all wild animals and unknown dogs and cats.
- Avoid wild animals-even if they appear friendly.
- Never coax a wild animal to eat from your hand.
- If you encounter a bat, do not handle it. Bats have extremely small teeth and you may not realize that you have been bitten.
- Teach your children to report all bites, scratches and encounters with a wild or unknown animals.



City of Wichita Falls

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To reduce the risk of exposure to rabies from wildlife, we recommend the following:

- Don't feed or water your pets outside. Even empty bowls will attract wild and stray animals. If you are feeding feral cats, feed early in the day and do not leave food out over night as that will attract wild animals as well.
- Keep your garbage securely covered. Open garbage will attract wild or stray animals.
- Wild animals should not be kept as pets.
- Enjoy all wild animals from a distance and teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals – even if they appear friendly.
- If you see a wild animal acting strangely, report it to city or county animal control officials.

If someone has been bitten or scratched by an unfamiliar or wild animal, contact a physician or the local Animal Control for immediate assistance. Citizens are discouraged from purchasing or taking “free” animals, especially puppies and kittens, from people trying to sell or give them away on the side of the road or in parking lots. Domesticated animals can be quarantined for a period of time for rabies observation and wildlife will be euthanized and sent to the Department of State Health Services for rabies testing.

Burkburnett Animal Control: 940-285-1144

Wichita Falls Animal Services: 940-761-7824

Media Point of Contact: Nicki Bacon, Animal Services Administrator, at 940-761-7834.

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