

To: Colorado 4-H Leaders, Families and Participants  
From: Keith Roehr, DVM. Colorado State Veterinarian  
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This spring we have noted an increase in skunks diagnosed with rabies in Colorado, most notably in Denver, El Paso, and Larimer counties, and to a lesser extent, in Jefferson and Weld counties. Historically Colorado was not considered an area with a large incidence of rabies, but in 2007 a variant associated with skunks began to move westward and rabies is now commonly reported in and along the Front Range. To follow the data on this trend, go online to Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/rabies-data>.)

Rabies is a fatal viral disease of warm blooded animals, including people, dogs, cats, horses, and livestock. The primary route of transmission for rabies is through the bite of an infected animal. People may also be exposed if saliva from an infected animal comes into contact with an open wound or the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, or mouth. Fortunately, there is a safe, effective, post-exposure vaccination for rabies available to humans. However, if left untreated, rabies infection virtually always causes death. Proper pre-exposure vaccination of your animals usually protects them.

It is the time of the year when you are working on your 4-H animal projects with an eye on participating in your local fair. For animal and human health and safety, livestock owners should consider vaccination of their project animals against rabies. When rabies vaccine is administered by your veterinarian you should receive vaccination documentation to keep for your records. If there is a rabies exposure, vaccinated animals may be treated differently than unvaccinated animals. Without proper documentation, the animals could be considered a threat to human safety and could be quarantined for up to six months. You should know that there are no rabies vaccines currently licensed for use in swine or goats, but we have recommended extra-label use of vaccine in these species. Your veterinarian is critical in extra-label use of vaccine and timing of vaccination for proper slaughter withdrawal. Poultry are not considered susceptible to rabies.

More information on Rabies can be found at:  
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment:  
<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/rabies>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html>

Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, 2016  
<http://nasphv.org/documentsCompendiaRabies.html>