



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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The Department of Livestock Reports Skunk Tests Positive for Rabies in Missoula County

Helena, Mont. – On Thursday November 21st, the Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) reported the first case of terrestrial (non-bat) rabies in Missoula County in 4 years. The rabies-infected animal was a skunk captured in the Wye area of Missoula on November 18th. Earlier that day a resident noticed the skunk acting abnormally and contacted Animal Control.

MDOL and Missoula City County Animal Control are working together to notify residents of the diagnosis. There are no known cat, dog, or human exposures at this time.

The Department of Livestock has issued a 60 day county-wide quarantine for dogs, cats and ferrets (MCA Title 81, Chapters 2 and 20). The terms of the quarantine include:

1. All non-vaccinated dogs, cats, and ferrets in Missoula County are to remain in the county for a period of not less than sixty (60) days.
2. Non-vaccinated dogs, cats or ferrets may be released from quarantine after a period of twenty-eight (28) days from the date of vaccination.
3. Any dog, cat or ferret in Missoula that is current on rabies vaccination is exempt from quarantine.

Rabies is a fatal disease of mammals that is virtually 100% preventable in domestic animals through the administration of rabies vaccine. Missoula County health regulations require that all dogs, cats and ferrets three months of age or older be vaccinated against rabies and revaccinated at appropriate times.

Historically, rabies in western Montana is seen almost exclusively in bats. The last two documented cases of terrestrial (non-bat) rabies west of the continental divide occurred in Missoula County in September of 2015, and November of 1996.

“At this time, areas west of the Continental Divide are not known to have rabies circulating in the skunk population. However, rabies is present in bat populations in Western Montana”, says Dr. Anna Forseth with the Department of Livestock.

Residents are encouraged to report any contact between a pet and a wild animal, including skunks and bats, to Animal Control or the Department of Livestock.

For further information contact: Anna Forseth, Program Veterinarian: ph. 406-444-2939, or Missoula City-Animal Control: ph. 406-541-7387

The mission of the Montana Department of Livestock is to control and eradicate animal diseases, prevent the transmission of animal diseases to humans, and to protect the livestock industry from theft and predatory animals. For more information on the Montana Department of Livestock, visit www.liv.mt.gov.