



For Immediate Release: July 8, 2014

Contact: Gary Sky, Public Information Officer, 720-200-1529

Rabies Confirmed in Highlands Ranch Raccoon

Health department advises to get pets vaccinated and warns against exposure to wild animals

Tri-County Health Department has confirmed that a dead raccoon collected in Highlands Ranch was infected with rabies. The property is in a heavily-populated area of Highlands Ranch, near University Boulevard and Highlands Ranch Parkway. There was no known human exposure to the raccoon.

“This rabies case is a good opportunity to remind people that having dogs and cats vaccinated against rabies is an easy and effective way to protect pets and humans from this deadly disease,” states John M. Douglas, Jr., MD, Executive Director of Tri-County Health Department. “We also encourage the owners of horses, cattle and other livestock to consult with their veterinarians regarding rabies vaccination for those animals.”

Rabies is caused by a virus that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals, and is nearly always fatal. The virus is shed in the saliva of infected animals. People or animals can get rabies from the bite of a rabid animal or from a rabid animal’s saliva if it comes in contact with their eyes, nose, mouth or open wounds. Immediate medical treatment is required after exposure to an infected animal.

To prevent exposure to this virus, skunks, bats, foxes, raccoons and other wildlife should not be handled or fed. A healthy animal usually will avoid human contact.

In addition to rabies vaccinations for pets and livestock, there are additional precautions to prevent possible exposure to rabies:

- Avoid contact with any wild animals, especially any that act unusually
- Teach children to stay away from all wild animals, stray domestic pets, or any dead animals and tell an adult if they are scratched or bitten
- Wildlife suffering from rabies will often be out during the day, act aggressively and violently approach people or pets. Rabid wildlife might also stumble or have trouble walking
- Do not let pets roam freely, since this can increase the chance that they could be exposed without your knowledge

- Contact your veterinarian if your dog or cat is bitten or scratched by a wild animal
- If a person has been bitten or scratched by a wild mammal, they should wash the area thoroughly with soap and water, seek immediate medical attention and also notify their local public health agency. Prompt medical treatment is the key to preventing rabies after a possible exposure
- Do not feed wild animals, since this reduces their natural fear of humans
- Do not leave pet food or livestock feed outside or feed more than your outdoor pet will finish in one feeding
- For questions or concerns about wildlife call Colorado Parks and Wildlife at 303-291-7227

If you have questions about rabies or whom to call in your area for response to a suspect animal, call the statewide public health information line, at 1-877-462-2911. More information about rabies is available at www.tchd.org/396/Animal-Bites-Rabies

###