

## DOC'S DESK

As we enter the fall season, our West Nile virus activity has picked up, as has rabies case reporting. Early in August the only rabies case for that month was confirmed, but since September 1 there have been two more. Ochiltree County appears to have settled down, but now activity has surfaced farther west in Hansford County. The most recent case prior to this in Hansford County was a horse reported on 7/31/11. Lubbock also had a skunk case reported in September, the first since 10/22/13. This serves as a reminder that even when no cases are being detected, the reservoir maintains the virus, so maintenance of pet and livestock vaccinations is very important. All that is needed for us to begin seeing more widespread case reporting is more animal-to-animal contact. The rains in 2014-2015 have helped increase wildlife numbers so we can expect to see more cases in the coming months/years. We now have 11 cases (all skunks) in Ochiltree County; three bats in Randall; 1 skunk in Hansford County; one skunk in Lubbock County; and one skunk in Wheeler County.

Another burgeoning population, at least in some locales, has been rats. Several complaints have come in from the Region about increased rodent activity. Please notify us of unusual increases and be alert for sudden die-offs. As numbers increase, the potential for tularemia or plague increases also. Studies have documented that heavy rainfall may have either a positive effect or a deleterious effect on rodent population months later depending on what part of the reproductive cycle the population is in when the heavy rains come. I suspect that our rains have been timed such that the populations have benefited.

West Nile has been quite active in September and early October. Our Fever cases total 13 while the Neurologic cases have reached 28. There have been 6 positive blood donors and 2 equine cases. This time last year our numbers were 17 Fevers, 17 Neurologic cases, 11 donors and 1 equine case. Please continue to practice the 4 Ds until cold fronts strong enough to reduce the average daily temperatures below the mid-70s become frequent. Until then virus transmission can occur.

If you're associated with a veterinary clinic or animal control, please be sure to check out the article on page 3 regarding a recent incident of potential human rabies exposure and the owner's desire to take the pet home, rather than having it submitted for testing. The law is on our side and testing is certainly a less expensive, as well as less traumatic, path than having to treat because an animal was not tested.

The two exotic avian influenzas, H5N1 and H5N2, seem to have been exterminated, at least from the country's commercial poultry flocks. Most have probably noticed the impact on egg and poultry meat prices. Your Thanksgiving turkey will most likely cost more this year.

The MERS coronavirus originating in the Middle East also remains active (Saudi Arabia still has the majority of cases). South Korea appeared to have finally managed to quell their imported outbreak discussed in the last newsletter, but the last symptomatic patient has relapsed and tested positive this month. Over 100 contacts are now being monitored. The economic impact from the outbreak in May-June has been severe. Tourism from foreign countries has declined by about 5-10% according to one estimate. That translates

into a revenue loss in US dollars of \$784.6 million to about \$1.7 billion.

Meanwhile, the Philippines have had two confirmed cases of MERS-CoV imported from Saudi Arabia this year. One was an ex-pat nurse and the other a Finnish tourist who passed through Saudi Arabia on his way to the Philippines. Neither of those cases appeared to have perpetrated an outbreak there. However, in late September, a Saudi Arabian tourist died in a private hospital in the Philippines with symptoms compatible with the disease. He was embalmed before the government was notified of his MERS-CoV compatible illness, thereby preventing confirmation. Out of more than 100 contacts, at least 15 people are being quarantined for observation. We hope that country's efforts will be more effective than those in South Korea, resulting in a shorter time to being virus-free. Thailand has apparently escaped an outbreak after a resident of Oman developed the disease after arrival. The US currently remains free of the disease, but is only one traveler away from another reintroduction of the disease, as demonstrated by these other countries.

Meanwhile, camel raisers in Saudi Arabia are threatening legal action against the government due to warnings that have been issued regarding camels and their potential role in the transmission of MERS-CoV. There are a lot of unknowns but due to the number of serological surveys showing camels to have high levels of antibodies, and in some cases, viral shedding, they are a "smoking gun" at a minimum.

Please feel free to contact our office if you have any zoonoses questions or unusual events to report. We hope the fall is a peaceful and safe time for everyone.

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## Why Not Cats?

By Karen McDonald

It's been more than 10 years since the state exam for Animal Control Officers (ACOs) included a practical portion after the written test. It always surprised me that the hardest part of it for many officers was when they had to properly pick up a cat and place it in a carrier. For some, the fear or just intense dislike of cats was almost palpable. Even more shocking was the number of times during the "hands-on training" section of the course that I'd heard the statement, "We don't handle cats in our town." I still hear it today which is puzzling, considering the years that we have spent training attendees how to be ACOs working in animal shelters, not dog catchers working in dog pounds, the former title encompassing a broad category of animals and not just the domestic dog.

I find that it's usually love or hate when it comes to cats, with very little gray area. Those feelings are irrelevant though for the job; even if an officer hates cats, he or she is duty bound by their own city ordinance to: a) respond to cat calls; b) impound and house any that are in violation of the ordinance; and c) hold the cat at the shelter for the minimum time frame noted in said ordinance. We're repeatedly hearing stories of ACOs who trap cats from residential areas and immediately transport them out to a farmer in the county who has requested them for rodent control purposes. Do these animals have owners that might be looking for them? Does your ordinance state that they'll be impounded for three days? Are these "kidnapped" cats even vaccinated against rabies before being released from the officer's custody? Violating the latter two means the ACO is in violation of not only their city ordinance but the Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 826. Ignoring the first is a hypocrisy that costs the officer in the public's eye and is unworthy of the profession.

Lastly, if a nuisance cat is picked up, in keeping with the minimum holding period designated by local law, there has to be a place to humanely house it, yet time and again we are running across facilities that were built with no consideration given for cats. This is a problem that should be corrected as soon as the budget will allow, and it has to be made a priority. Shelters that are 30 or 40 years old may have been built with the intention of only housing dogs, but times have changed. The increase in legal restrictions on free-roaming pets, the influx of smaller exotic species and the fact that an estimated 30.4% of households in the United States have cats as pets (according to the 2012 US Pet Ownership Estimates by the American Veterinary Medical Association) make it imperative that small caging units be a planned part of any shelter design today.

We have already spoken to a number of towns about options for cage units and modifications to existing facilities. If yours is still not equipped, start working on it today. The cats deserve it and the cat lovers in your community will appreciate it.

On September 1, 2015, several revisions were made to the 2014 *ACO Training Manual*. The revisions to the *ACO Training Manual* have been posted online at:

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/zoonosis/education/training/aco/manual/onLine/>

## Education Alert – Rabies!

By James Alexander, DVM, MPVM, ACVPM

A recent event in HSR I highlighted an unexpected outcome of a dog that possibly had rabies. An owner presented at a veterinary clinic early one morning with a 4 year old dog that was exhibiting unusual CNS symptoms. The owner reported it was rabies vaccinated. The veterinarian concluded on examination that the symptoms were most likely not due to rabies, but without a test of the brain, rabies remained in the differential. The animal died at the clinic.

The veterinarian advised the man to contact the HSR I Zoonosis Control staff. I took the call at about 2:00 p.m. on a Thursday. He explained that the veterinarian had advised him to call our office and described the dog as having difficulty eating for about two weeks. This further lent support to this not being rabies, but with CNS symptoms it could not be definitively ruled out. The dog had been vaccinated about three years before, most likely only once. This made it not current on its rabies immunization status. I asked where the dog was seen and began the investigation. I did not ask where the dog was, assuming it was being shipped for testing.

It turned out that the owner wanted to take the dog home to bury it. The veterinarian did not think that the owner could be required to submit the animal for rabies testing. However, due to the owner reporting that he had been trying to feed the animal for some days and had gotten his hands, with cut fingers, wet with saliva, he had been correctly advised to contact Zoonosis control.

I called the man back and found out the animal had been buried earlier in the day, with temperatures of about 100° F by 2:00 p.m. The owner weighed in excess of 200 pounds. I informed him that without a test he would be facing a biologics cost of +/- \$4,000. That is when he informed me that three other adult family members were also involved in feeding the animal and rubbing their faces, etc. That brought the costs up into the \$12,000-16,000 range.

He was asked to exhume the body; the local Animal Control Agency was contacted and the head was removed and shipped that afternoon by a local veterinary clinic. The risk was that the brain could have decomposed during the burial period and that adequate chilling could not be achieved by shipping time. Because so much time had transpired since the original potential exposure date, there was a need for expediency, so shipping was done while plans were put into place to get treatment initiated by Saturday if the brain could not be tested negative. Another factor was that by shipping via a courier on Thursday, the head may not have arrived by Friday. Normally, samples arriving by courier on Friday cannot be tested until Saturday morning.

We were blessed in that all things worked like clockwork, with the head arriving on Friday and the lab staff going above and beyond and getting the sample tested that afternoon, an unusual event. The animal tested negative, saving a lot of money for unnecessary biologics.

The lesson that is important in this event is described in the following condensation of our Law (826) and our associated Rules (169):

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**Sec. 826.042. QUARANTINE OF ANIMALS.**

(b) The local rabies control authority or a veterinarian shall quarantine or test in accordance with board rules any animal that the local rabies control authority or veterinarian has probable cause to believe is rabid, may have been exposed to rabies, or may have exposed a person to rabies.

(e) A veterinarian shall quarantine an animal that:

- (1) is in the possession of the veterinarian; and
- (2) the veterinarian knows or suspects is rabid or has exposed an individual to rabies.

**Chapter 169**

- a) When a dog, cat, or domestic ferret that has bitten a human has been identified, the custodian will place the animal (regardless of its vaccination status) in quarantine as defined in the Texas Health and Safety Code, §826.002, until the end of the 10-day observation period. The animal must also be quarantined if there is probable cause to believe that it has otherwise exposed a human to rabies....
- c) The alternative to quarantining (to include home confining) a dog, cat, or domestic ferret that has bitten or otherwise potentially exposed a person to rabies as described in subsection (a) of this section is to have the animal euthanatized in such a manner that the brain is not damaged and a suitable specimen submitted to a department-designated laboratory for rabies testing....

I hope this provides the support you need to deal with owners who do not want to submit a pet for testing. It can be understandable when an owner is reluctant to have a head removed. The animal is a part of the family; there is usually head removal and shipping expense involved; etc. However, once the potential costs of treating are summed up and the law is explained, there should be no objections. If there are, please feel free to elicit the assistance of our staff.

## Arizona Rules All Dogs Sold in Pet Stores to Come from Shelters

AMANDA FROELICH OSC ON AUGUST 14, 2015



Good news for **rescue** groups, shelter volunteers, and animal lovers everywhere: efforts to put “puppy mills” out of business are paying off!

On July 30, 2015, a federal judge in Phoenix, Arizona upheld a city law **requiring all dogs sold in pet stores to come only from shelters or non-profit rescues**. The ruling was **mandated** to help cut “puppy mill” profits.

If you’re not aware, “puppy mills” are **notoriously cruel for a number of reasons**. First, they focus on breeding solely for profit, therefore, the **welfare** of the animal is rarely a priority. Second, female dogs spend a good portion of their life impregnated with little time for recovery in between **litters**. In addition, many dogs live in cramped cages with little room to **play or exercise**.

If that’s not enough, while millions of animals end up **homeless** and are later  **euthanized** in shelters, the same number of dogs are bred and sold in pet stores.

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At present, Phoenix is one of about 60 cities in the United States that have similar laws in place to put an end to **puppy mills** by driving potential pet buyers toward **homeless animals** and reputable breeders.

With an estimated 23,000 dogs sold in Phoenix area pet stores ever year, this law will no doubt benefit many animals' lives. **Shelter** dogs can spend months or even years waiting for adoption so mandates like this can cut that wait time in half and **reduce overcrowding** in shelters.

Said Phoenix City Councilwoman Thelma Williams, "We have so many dogs in Arizona that need homes, we don't need to import them."

The *Phoenix Business Journal* **reports** that certain pet stores, including Puppies N' Love have challenged the **ordinance**. However, it is "not [the court's] place to judge the wisdom or **fairness** of the city's decision to pass the ordinance," said the U.S. District Court Judge David Campbell.

Said Maureen Beyers, a Phoenix-Based **attorney** representing the Humane Society of the United States:

*"The ruling is a great **victory**, not just for the city of Phoenix, but also for the Humane Society of the United States, which has worked tirelessly to help **municipalities** throughout the U.S. enact these laws (and defend challenges to them) to stem the trade of puppy and kitten mill animals and decrease animal euthanasia and **overpopulation**."*

*This story was originally published on **True Activist**.*

- See more at:

[http://bullhorn.nationofchange.org/arizona\\_rules\\_dogs\\_sold\\_in\\_pet\\_stores\\_to\\_come\\_from\\_shelters#sthash.luoMjYIH.dpuf](http://bullhorn.nationofchange.org/arizona_rules_dogs_sold_in_pet_stores_to_come_from_shelters#sthash.luoMjYIH.dpuf)

## **Rabies Awareness & Prevention Poster Contest for K through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

The Department of State Health Services Zoonosis Control Branch will be conducting a statewide "Rabies Awareness & Prevention Poster Contest" for K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Kids that participate in the contest will learn about the importance of rabies vaccinations, respecting wildlife from a distance, and notifying adults if they think they may have been exposed to an animal with rabies. There are really nice prizes provided by the Zach Jones Memorial Fund for winners in each age group (Kinder, and grades 1-2, 3-5 & 6-8). This would be a perfect activity for schools participating in C-Scope as an informational text or procedural text assignment or as an extra credit project for an art or science class. Posters will be accepted any time prior to but no later than the **April 8, 2016 deadline**. Information about the contest can be downloaded from the DSHS Zoonosis Control website: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/zoonosis/>.

Please contact Bonny Mayes (512-776-2888; [bonny.mayes@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:bonny.mayes@dshs.state.tx.us)) if you have any questions!



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|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|
| Dallam     | Sherman   | Hansford   | Ochiltree | Lipscomb      |           |
| Hartley    | Moore     | Hutchinson | Roberts   | Hemphill      |           |
| Oldham     | Patterson | Carson     | Gray      | Wheeler       |           |
| Deaf Smith | Randall   | Armstrong  | Danley    | Collingsworth |           |
| Farmer     | Castro    | Swisher    | Briscoe   | Hall          | Childress |
| Bailey     | Lamb      | Hale       | Floyd     | Motley        |           |
| Cochran    | Beckley   | Lubbock    | Crosby    | Dickens       | King      |
| Vanhook    | Terry     | Lynn       | Garza     |               |           |

## About 20% of annual brucellosis cases reported to CDC occur due to recreational exposure while hunting (CDC, unpublished data).

In 2014, CDC and USDA partnered to develop posters, informational brochures, flyers, and personal wallet cards targeted towards feral swine hunters. The materials highlight important messages on brucellosis, such as modes of transmission, symptom presentation in humans, as well as diagnosis and treatment. Key messages surrounding prevention include wearing protective gear while hunting and butchering, practicing safe field dressing methods, avoiding direct contact with feral swine, and following food safety recommendations while cooking meat from feral swine.

We are excited to announce that these materials are now available on the CDC site in print-ready format!

Please feel free to distribute to appropriate individuals and groups that would benefit from this information.

[Resources for Hunters and Brucellosis](#)

## DSHS FREE PUBLICATIONS

Those who have access to the internet can order DSHS publications online. The Zoonosis Control Branch has pamphlets on a variety of topics, such as mosquito control, rabies, animal bites, plague, encephalitis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and tick borne diseases. You can search for publications by title, subject, keyword, language, format or publications number, and pamphlets will be shipped to you at no cost. To order pamphlets online, visit the website: <http://hhsc.pinnaclecart.com/dshs/>.

If you have any questions, please call Tonya at (806) 655-7151 ext. 1104.

## [Navigating to the Zoonosis Branch website](#)

Have a hard time remembering [www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/zoonosis/](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/zoonosis/) every time you search for information on the Zoonosis website? Well, we do too. Domain names for various areas on our site have been around for a long time and are often provided when directing individuals to specific pages. They're quick, easy-to-remember links that get you to where you want to be faster. Dr. Laura Robinson in the Austin office was kind enough to remind us of five that we use frequently. They are not case-sensitive, but some parts are capitalized to make them easier to remember:

Zoonosis Control home page: [www.TexasZoonosis.org](http://www.TexasZoonosis.org)

ZC rabies home page: [www.TexasRabies.org](http://www.TexasRabies.org)

ZC oral rabies vaccination program home page: [www.TexasORVP.org](http://www.TexasORVP.org)

ZC animal control home page: [www.TexasACO.org](http://www.TexasACO.org)

ZC West Nile virus home page: [www.TxWestNile.org](http://www.TxWestNile.org)