news release

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Feb. 7, 2017

Dog tests positive for rabies

The Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) Public Health Laboratory has confirmed that a dog that was briefly in Humboldt County has tested positive for rabies.

This dog is believed to have contracted rabies after an encounter with a rabid skunk near Ruth Lake in Trinity County. An investigation has determined that the dog was in Humboldt County during its infectious period only on its way to veterinary care in Fortuna, where it was euthanized.

The case marks the second time in eight months that a dog has tested positive for rabies at the Humboldt County Public Health Lab. There had been no positive tests for dogs before that since 2010.

In 2016, 50 animals in Humboldt County were tested for rabies. Eight were positive, including four foxes, two bats, one cat and one dog. In 2015, only one animal tested positive in Humboldt County. In 2013 and 2014 there were no positive tests.

Rabies is always present in the wildlife population throughout Humboldt County, especially among skunks, bats and foxes.

Preventive measures include avoiding contact with wild and stray animals, bringing pet foods indoors at night, reporting any domestic animal bites to your county or municipal animal control officer. Wildlife bites should be reported to DHHS's Division of Environmental Health (DEH).

Public Health officials stress the importance of fully vaccinating domestic animals against rabies, including dogs, cats and select livestock.

If you are bitten by an animal that may have rabies, wash the bite wound immediately with soap and water and seek medical attention. If your animal is bitten, contact DEH to report details of the encounter. Do not shoot a

potentially rabid animal in the head, because the brain is needed for testing. If appropriate, keep a deceased animal for testing.

For questions about rabies or to report a rabid animal, please call the DHHS Division of Environmental Health at 707-445-6215 or toll free at 1-800-963-9241.

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