



Connie Beck, Director
Social Services | Public Health | Behavioral Health

news release

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DEH reminds county residents what to look out for after fox found near Manila beach tests positive for rabies

The Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) Public Health Laboratory, in partnership with the California Department of Public Health Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory, confirmed that a fox found at the Lanphere Dunes in the Arcata area tested positive for rabies. The animal was brought into the lab for testing after being found dead under a U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) work truck on Lanphere Road.

Last week DHHS's Division of Environmental Health (DEH) received a report that a fox bit someone and then attacked a moving vehicle the following day on Lanphere Road. The person who was bit is currently undergoing treatment for rabies exposure. Two days after these encounters, DEH received the report of the dead fox.

Benjamin Dolf, DEH Supervising Environmental Health Specialist, said staff notified stakeholder agencies, including USFWS, which manages the dunes, Friends of the Dunes, which manages public access privileges and the Bureau of Land Management, which manages the neighboring Ma-le'l Dunes. "Based on the fox's aggressive behavior," USFWS staff had already posted warning signage and temporarily closed public access to the Lanphere Dunes wildlife refuge.

Although rabies is always present in the wildlife population throughout Humboldt County, especially foxes, skunks and bats, Dolf said, "It's very likely that the fox found dead was the same fox from the other two incidents."

However, he said people in the area between Manila and Mad River Beach who see a wild animal acting strangely should contact DEH which is monitoring reports in that area. He said as a general rule, it is important to use caution around wild animals, and if you encounter an animal that is sick, injured or docile, "Do not try to approach it, help it or try to nurse it back to health," Dolf said. People who

come across sick or injured animals can contact the Humboldt Wildlife Care Center which has staff who are trained to respond.

Preventive measures against the spread of rabies in Humboldt County include avoiding contact with wild and stray animals, bringing pet food indoors at night, reporting animal bites to your county or municipal animal control officer, and if you are bitten, washing the bite immediately with soap and water and seeking medical attention.

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

For questions about rabies or to report a rabid or suspected rabid animal, call DEH at 707-445-6215 or toll free at 1-800-963-9241.

To report a sick or injured animal, contact the Humboldt Wildlife Care Center at 707-822-8839.

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