

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

June 14, 2023

CONTACT:

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Skunk Tests Positive for Rabies in Powder River County

Helena, Mont. – On Tuesday June 13th, the Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) received confirmation of a case of terrestrial (non-bat) rabies in the state. The rabies-infected skunk was captured in Powder River County. One dog was exposed to the rabid skunk and is being managed for exposure.

In response, MDOL has issued a 60 day county-wide quarantine for dogs, cats and ferrets in Powder River County that are not currently vaccinated for rabies (MCA Title 81, Chapters 2 and 20). The quarantine is in effect from Tuesday, June 13th to Saturday, August 12th. Written notification from MDOL will be provided when this quarantine is released.

The quarantine requirements state that all non-vaccinated or not currently vaccinated dogs, cats, and ferrets in Powder River County are to remain in the county for a period of not less than sixty (60) days from the date of the last known terrestrial rabies. Any dog, cat or ferret in Powder River County having been properly immunized against rabies for the first time, may be released from the quarantine area after a period of twenty-eight (28) days from the date of vaccination. Any dog, cat, or ferret in Powder River County that is past-due on the rabies vaccine, may be immediately released from the quarantine area following administration of a rabies booster vaccine.

"DOL recognizes that pets in the quarantine area may be too young for a rabies vaccination," says Dr. Merry Michalski with the Department of Livestock. "In these instances, if a pet is too young for rabies vaccination but must travel out of Powder River County, then the animal must receive permission from the MT State Veterinarian and from the destination State Veterinarian if traveling out of state."

Rabies is a fatal viral disease that can spread through the saliva of an infected animal. The virus can infect any mammal, including people. However, it is virtually 100% preventable in domestic animals through the administration of rabies vaccine.

"Rabies vaccines not only protect the health of an individual animal, but they also protect the health of the animal owners and other pets from this fatal disease," says Dr. Marty Zaluski, MT State Veterinarian. "It is a low-cost, safe, and effective tool that we encourage all pet owners to pursue."

The most common animals infected with rabies in Montana are bats but cases involving terrestrial species do occur. The last documented cases of terrestrial (non-bat) rabies in Powder River County was in June 2022. Residents should report any contact between a pet and a wild animal, including skunks and bats, to their veterinarian or the MDOL to ensure potential rabies exposure are assessed for risk and managed accordingly.

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 MDOL, visit www.liv.mt.gov.

STATE OF MONTANA

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ORDER OF QUARANTINE

6/14/23

Powder River County Commissioners
PO Box 200
Broadus, MT 59317

Quarantine Number: 15051GT2-012 Effective Date: 6/13/23 Expected Release Date: 8/12/23

Powder River County is placed under sixty-day quarantine following the diagnosis of rabies in a skunk on 6/13/23 (MCA Title 81, Chapters 2 and 20). The terms of the quarantine are as follows:

1. All non-vaccinated or not currently vaccinated dogs, cats, and ferrets in Powder River County are to remain in the county for a period of not less than sixty (60) days from the date of the last known terrestrial rabies.
2. Any dog, cat or ferret in Powder River County having been properly immunized against rabies for the first time, may be released from the quarantine area after a period of twenty-eight (28) days from the date of vaccination.
3. Any dog, cat or ferret in Powder River County that is past-due on the rabies vaccine, may be immediately released from the quarantine area following administration of a booster vaccine.
4. Written notification from MDOL will be provided when this quarantine is released.

ARM 32.3.1202 through 32.3.1206 (attached) contains additional information regarding the management of rabies incidents in Montana.

If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,

Merry Michalski
Program Veterinarian
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cc: Shawn Hando, Enforcement
Powder River County Health Department
Powder River County Sheriff Department