

Wyoming Livestock Board
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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

State vets warn of high prevalence of rabies in wild species in 2018

State veterinarian Dr. Jim Logan and the Wyoming Department of Health state public health veterinarian Dr. Karl Musgrave want to remind veterinarians and the general public about the prevalence of rabies in Wyoming. Wyoming has had numerous cases of rabies in wildlife (skunks and bats) in Wyoming already in 2018. There has also been a case in a domestic horse in Laramie County as a result of exposure from wildlife. In previous years, Wyoming has had rabies cases in dogs, cats, and cattle as well.

Everyone should be aware that currently-available rabies vaccines are only labeled for, and proven to be effective in, preventing rabies in domestic species, and there is no credible evidence that these vaccines protect wild species against the disease.

The following is from the National Association of Public Health Veterinarians Rabies Compendium:

“Vaccination of wildlife and wild animal hybrids

The safety and efficacy of parenteral rabies vaccines in wildlife and wild animal hybrids have not been established, and no rabies vaccines are currently licensed for use in these animals. Thus, any use of rabies vaccines in these animals is considered extralabel use.

Zoos or research institutions may establish vaccination programs in an attempt to protect valuable animals, but these should not replace appropriate public health activities that protect humans.”

Wild animals or “domesticated” wild animals that are vaccinated are not necessarily protected against rabies, and it puts humans at risk of false security thinking their animals are protected. Veterinarians are advised to *not* vaccinate wild species for rabies. The extra-label use of rabies vaccine could result in liability to the veterinarian.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department also advises that private ownership of some wild species including wolves, and hybrids thereof, is strictly prohibited by state statute. Some wildlife species are allowed to be owned, but no available vaccine has been proven to be effective in protecting them from rabies infection. Wild species can be infected with rabies without showing any signs of the disease. Vaccinating an already-infected animal *does not* rid the animal of the infection or prevent it from being contagious.

Veterinarians should adhere to the guidelines in the NAPHV Rabies Compendium (available online) and also to the Wyoming State Veterinarian’s Chapter 1: “Rabies Prevention and Post Exposure

Management Rules,” available on the Wyoming Livestock Board website (<http://wlsb.state.wy.us>) when advising their clients about rabies prevention.

For more information on rabies you can contact Dr. Karl Musgrave (WY Department of Health) at 307-777-5825 or Dr. Jim Logan (WY Livestock Board) at 307-857-4140. Information on wildlife ownership can be obtained by calling the Wyoming Game and Fish Department at 307-777-4600 for “A Guide to Understanding Wildlife Possession Laws and Regulations in Wyoming”.