



Sierra County Health and Human Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Confirmed Rabies in Grey Fox in Sierra County

Loyalton, CA – December 30, 2021: The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory has confirmed the detection of rabies virus in a grey fox from Sierra County. The fox was collected near Sierraville on December 13, 2021, following a report to California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) that it was observed behaving abnormally. CDFW isolated the fox, which was displaying neurologic signs until it died on December 15th. Lab analysis was conducted and rabies virus confirmed on December 29, 2021. It is believed that there were no bites or other contacts of concern between the fox and members of the public, the wildlife rehab center, or CDFW staff.

Rabies is a severe infection of the nervous system caused by a virus that is most often transmitted through the bite from a rabid animal. It is nearly always fatal once someone develops clinical signs, but it can be prevented with prompt medical attention and prophylaxis following a possible exposure. People should avoid contact with wild animals and seek immediate medical care if they are bitten by a wild animal.

Rabies is prevalent throughout California, mostly in bats and regionally also in skunks. Occasionally spillover of rabies virus from these species is seen in other wild animals, including foxes. “Earlier this autumn, we identified three rabid foxes in Plumas County – all were infected with bat strains of rabies virus. It is likely that this fox was similarly exposed” according to State Public Health Veterinarian, Curtis L. Fritz.

With the onset of cold winter temperatures, most bats have migrated or are hibernating, so the risk of additional transmission is negligible. However, there may yet be another fox or more incubating rabies from exposures that occurred 1-2 months ago. Therefore, the public should be aware of the risk posed by foxes and other wild mammals, and cautioned to avoid contact, and alert appropriate animal control or wildlife officials if they encounter any animal displaying strange behavior.

The last rabies detection in Sierra County was a single skunk in 1994. Nevertheless, residents should remember that there is always a risk of contracting rabies from both wild and domestic animals.

Sierra County Public Health officials are advising residents to take the following measures to protect themselves, their pets, and livestock from rabies:

- Avoid contact with wild animals, like foxes. Rabid animals may appear aggressive, docile, or injured. Do not approach any wild animal or attempt to feed or capture it.
- Discourage wildlife from being around homes by collecting uneaten pet food and keeping garbage bins covered and secure.
- Consult with your veterinarian to ensure that dogs and cats are up to date on rabies vaccinations and consider vaccinating horses and other livestock.
- If you observe wild or stray animals that are behaving unusually, contact Sierra County Environmental Health at 530-993-6716 or the Sierra County Sheriff’s Office at 530-289-3700 after business hours.

- If bitten by an animal, it is important to contact animal control authorities to catch the animal so it can be determined if the animal has rabies. The Sheriff's Office may contact Fish and Wildlife to assist with the capture of certain wildlife.
- Seek immediate medical care if you are bitten by or have direct contact with an animal that draws blood. Your healthcare provider will provide wound care and determine whether rabies post-exposure prophylaxis is needed.

For more information, please go to: [Rabies | CDC](#)

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