



**Public Health**  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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**DATE:** July 6, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Rabies confirmed in cat

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

#### **First cat confirmed to have rabies in Larimer County**

The Larimer County Department of Health and Environment announced today that a kitten has been confirmed to have rabies. This is the first positive cat reported in Larimer County since the Health Department was established in 1968. The kitten was born to an unvaccinated barn cat on a rural agricultural property north of Fort Collins.

According to the Health Department, the animal was submitted for rabies testing by a local veterinarian who had examined it for neurological problems and was bitten by the cat. The animal was euthanized and sent to the CSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab, which confirmed it had rabies. The kitten was unvaccinated.

During the time the kitten was infectious, it had also bitten or scratched several family members. Three adults and five children are currently receiving rabies vaccine for their exposure.

“Many barn cats in Larimer County are not vaccinated, even though rabies immunizations are required by county ordinance for all cats and dogs,” said Dr. Adrienne LeBailly, director of the Health Department. “This situation clearly demonstrates that leaving barn cats and livestock unvaccinated—especially those in close contact with people—puts family members, friends, and animal health professionals at risk of infection.”

She noted that six other unvaccinated cats on the property had to be euthanized, and the livestock cannot be moved from the property for 90 days.

Since May 2012, when skunks surpassed bats as the most common source of rabies in Larimer County, rabies has been also been confirmed in raccoons, foxes, and bison. Other potential exposures investigated by the Health Department have included llamas, horses, dogs, and

alpacas. Several horses in Colorado have died of rabies, the closest a horse on the Weld/Larimer County border in June.

“The number and location of the positive animals isn’t as important as knowing that skunk rabies is now widespread along the front range and nearby foothills of Larimer County,” said LeBailly. “Unvaccinated pets and livestock could be exposed to rabies almost anywhere throughout the county.”

The risk of domestic animals being exposed to rabies increased significantly in May 2012 when rabid skunks became common in Larimer County. Previously, bats had been the main carrier of rabies. Skunk rabies is a type of “terrestrial” rabies, meaning that it is carried by animals that travel on the ground, rather than by bats that fly. Rabies in ground-dwelling animals increases the risk of rabies exposure to pets, livestock, and humans.

The Health Department stresses that rabies vaccination is the best way to keep pets, livestock, and—most importantly—humans from contracting this fatal illness. Keeping pet and livestock vaccinations up-to-date is the only way to avoid putting pets through a lengthy quarantine or euthanasia if they have an encounter with a rabid animal. Livestock owners should check with their veterinarian about rabies vaccinations for their horses, cattle, and other livestock.

County residents are advised to stay clear of animals that appear sick or behave strangely, and to report such animals to the Larimer Humane Society Animal Control program at 970-226-3647, #7. If you suspect your pet or livestock have been in contact with a rabid animal or if they are showing signs of illness or unusual or aggressive behavior, contact your veterinarian.

Thirty-two animals have been confirmed to have rabies in Larimer County since January 1, 2013. This number reflects only those animals that have been tested because of encounters with people, pets, or livestock; many more have not been tested.

For more information on rabies and steps to reduce the risk of exposure, or to see maps showing locations where rabid animals have been found in Larimer County in 2013 and 2012, see:

<http://larimer.org/health/ehs/rabies.htm>  
<http://www.larimer.org/maps/rabies.cfm>  
<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>

**CSU EQUINE AND LIVESTOCK RABIES INFORMATION SHEET**  
<http://bit.ly/10QVu5g>

Report sick or unusual-acting wildlife or other animals to Larimer Humane Society’s animal control program: **226-3647, #7**

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