

## **Rabies Update 2008**

The Arizona State Health Laboratory has confirmed rabies infection in a bobcat and coyote from Rainbow Valley in South Buckeye. On November 23, 2007, a Buckeye resident reported a bobcat was acting unusual and aggressive in Rainbow Valley. On April 28, 2008, another Buckeye resident reported a coyote that was stumbling and attacking fence lines. Both animals were submitted by the Arizona Game & Fish Department to the Arizona State Health Lab for rabies testing. Both animals were positive for rabies.

If an animal (horse, dog, cat, livestock) is bitten or otherwise exposed to a rabid animal, it must undergo an extended quarantine. For dogs or cats that are not currently vaccinated for rabies which are exposed to a rabid animal, according to state regulations, must either undergo a 6 month quarantine at an animal control center or veterinary clinic (at the owner's expense) or be euthanized. If they are currently vaccinated and are exposed to a rabid animal, an immediate rabies vaccine must be administered and a 45-day home quarantine is required.

Rabies is a virus which affects the nervous system. The disease is usually contracted from a bite or saliva contaminating an open wound. In Arizona, skunks, bats and foxes are the most common carriers of this virus. In both of these cases, the viruses were the gray fox variant of rabies. Wild animals which could carry the disease in Arizona include foxes, skunks, bats, coyotes, javelina, coati, and raccoons. The incubation time can vary from weeks to months before clinical signs appear. Since rabies affects the nervous system, the most common sign is behavioral changes. In horses, signs can include fever, depression, lameness, wobbly gait, muscle fasciculations, or anorexia. These symptoms will quickly progress over the next 5-7 days until death. There is no treatment, only prevention. Once an animal shows clinical signs of the disease, it is almost always fatal.

We are recommending to all Buckeye residents to be sure that all your dogs, cats and horses are vaccinated for rabies. You can call our clinic to set up an appointment to have your horses vaccinated. Foals can be vaccinated if they are older than 3 months. Boosters are recommended annually for horses. The AAEP (American Association of Equine Practitioners) now recommends rabies vaccine as one of the "core vaccines". Even if you don't live in Buckeye, if you camp, travel, or would like to have your horse vaccinated, please call for an appointment. If you need your dog or cat vaccinated, please call your local small animal veterinarian.

If you see a wild animal acting unusual, neurologic, or aggressive, please call the Arizona Dept of Health at 602-364-4562. Do not approach any wildlife acting unusual or aggressive. Humans are also susceptible to this fatal disease if bitten.