

Region 8 Zoonosis Control Newsletter



Public Health Region 8 | Zoonosis Control

Texas Department of State Health Services

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Winter Wishes

1 *By Amanda Kieffer*

1 We hope everyone had a joyous holiday season and had a productive
2 start to the New Year! As we move into 2022, we look forward to
3 hosting some virtual CE Courses and representing Region 8 across the
4 state. This newsletter will include an informative rabies summary, a
5 spotlight on the Oral Rabies Vaccination Program (ORVP), and a review
6 of some important legislative updates. As the cold weather continues,
6 we remind you to consider the ambient temperatures for your shelter
animals. Per state law, animals should have adequate shelter to protect
from cold or inclement weather and auxiliary heat or bedding material
should be provided if temperatures fall below 50°F. Wishing everyone a
warm Spring in the weeks ahead!

Zoonosis News

Human Rabies Case

In October of 2021, Region 8 investigated a human case of rabies in a school-aged child bitten by a bat in Medina County. This investigation highlighted the importance of increasing public awareness of the risks of bats and rabies. On Page 3, see our overview of Rabies: A Fatal But Preventable Disease.

Oral Rabies Vaccination Program

In January, Region 8 Zoonosis Team member Jon Stewart participated in the 2022 Oral Rabies Vaccination Program (ORVP). See his article on Page 4 for a summary of this important initiative!



Jon Stewart, ORVP 2022

Rabies Update

By: Trevor Maness

Annual Rabies Update: January – December 2021

Between January and December of 2021, bats made up 60% of all positive rabies reports, followed by skunks (16%), raccoons (14%), foxes (3%), cats (5%), and dogs (2%).

2021 Rabies Cases in Animals, Region 8 January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021

	Bat	Cat	Dog	Skunk	Raccoon	Fox	All
Atascosa							0
Bandera							0
Bexar	23				1		24
Calhoun							0
Comal	2	2		1	1	2	8
Dewitt				1			1
Dimmit							0
Edwards							0
Frio							0
Gillespie	2				1		3
Goliad							0
Gonzales	2			3			5
Guadalupe	2						2
Jackson							0
Karnes							0
Kendall							0
Kerr	1	1		1	4		7
Kinney							0
La Salle							0
Lavaca	1			3			4
Maverick							0
Medina	1		1				2
Real					1		1
Victoria	1						1
Uvalde							0
Val Verde							0
Wilson							0
Zavala							0
TOTALS	35	3	1	9	8	2	58

Rabies: A Fatal But Preventable Disease

By: *Amanda Kieffer*

In October of 2021, the Region 8 Zoonosis Team investigated a rare case of human rabies in a child bitten by a bat. This was the first case of human rabies in a Texas resident since 2009. Cases of human rabies are extremely rare, with only 1 to 3 cases reported in the United States annually.

Rabies is a fatal but preventable viral disease that affects the brain. The virus is shed in the saliva of infected mammals and is usually transmitted through a bite or a scratch. There are rabies vaccines to prevent infection and death caused by the virus, however they must be received before symptoms start.

Wild animals make up over 90% of positive rabid animals in the United States, with bats being the most frequently reported. In Texas, the most common high-risk animals for rabies include bats, skunks, raccoon, foxes, and coyotes. Occasionally pets and livestock can also have rabies. Rabies vaccination of dogs and cats, as required by state law, is an important action to prevent the spread of rabies in domestic animals.

A person who is bitten or scratched by any animal should wash the wound immediately with soap and water and seek medical attention to discuss the possible need for rabies vaccination. They should also contact animal control to retrieve the animal for quarantine or testing. If an animal dies during quarantine or tests positive for rabies, immediate rabies vaccination is necessary to prevent infection.

Bat exposures are of particular concern because their teeth and bites are small and sometimes cannot be seen or felt. Contact with a wild bat is always considered high risk for rabies exposure, even if the person does not recall a bite or scratch. The following bat scenarios would warrant urgent consultation and/or medical attention:

- A known bite or scratch from a bat
- Touching, handling, or holding of a bat
- Bat flying into, against, or landing on a person
- A bat found in the bedroom of someone who was sleeping
- Children found unattended with a bat nearby
- A bat found near a person who is sensory or mentally challenged

DSHS, medical, and public health personnel can assist anyone with questions concerning rabies exposure. If you have questions or would like assistance with rabies risk assessments, please call Region 8 Zoonosis Control at 210-949-2121.

Oral Rabies Vaccination Program

By: Jon Stewart

The DSHS Oral Rabies Vaccination Program (ORVP) aims to control and prevent domestic dog/coyote variant rabies and gray fox variant rabies in Texas. The 28th annual ORVP bait airdrop occurred January 11 – 24, 2022, with operations out of Zapata, Del Rio, and Alpine. The project consisted of 19 counties total and included the distribution of 1,173,300 oral rabies vaccine baits which were dispersed at 75 baits per square mile.

The project was completed 1.5 days early due to clear weather and efficient flying. The team conducted between 8 to 16 flights per day at 500 to 1,000 feet above ground level along half-mile interval lines and in total, there were 94 separate flights that flew 37094 miles for a total of 266 hours (not including baits distributed by the helicopters).

This project included collaboration of agency staff from USDA-Wildlife Services, Texas Military Department, USDA National Rabies Management Program (NRMP) and DSHS as well as flight staff from Dynamic Aviation. The map below represents the Border Maintenance Zone encompassing this year's ORVP mission.



For More Information: <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/rabies/orvp.aspx>

Legislative Updates

By: Trevor Maness

On September 1, 2021, two changes were made to the Texas Health and safety code regarding microchip scanning and dangerous dogs.

Microchip Scanning

House bill 640 amended HSC Chapter 823 by adding a new section, 823.004. This section requires those defined as animal shelters or releasing agencies (823.001) to scan for a microchip as soon as is practicable after the animal is taken into custody. See the exact wording below:

Sec. 823.004. MICROCHIP SCAN REQUIRED. As soon as practicable after an animal is placed in the custody of an animal shelter or a releasing agency as defined by Section 828.001, including an animal rescue organization, the shelter, agency, or organization shall scan the animal to determine whether a microchip is implanted in the animal.

Dangerous Dogs

House bill 3340 amended HSC Chapter 822 by changing the wording of 822.042 (e) as well as including the new subsection (e-1). The amendment of section (e) saw the removal of wording regarding the appeal time, and now subsection (e-1) breaks down the process for appeal. See the exact wording below:

(e) Subject to Subsection (e-1), the [The] court shall order the animal control authority to humanely destroy the dog if the owner has not complied with Subsection (a) before the 11th day after the date on which the dog is seized or delivered to the authority[, except that, notwithstanding any other law or local regulation, the court may not order the destruction of a dog during the pendency of an appeal under Section 822.0424]. The court shall order the authority to return the dog to the owner if the owner complies with Subsection (a) before the 11th day after the date on which the dog is seized or delivered to the authority.

(e-1) Notwithstanding any other law or local regulation:

(1) any order to destroy a dog is stayed for a period of 10 calendar days from the date the order is issued, during which period the dog's owner may file a notice of appeal; and

(2) a court, including a justice court, may not order the destruction of a dog during the pendency of an appeal under Section 822.0424.

Unlawful Restraint

Effective January 18, 2022, there was an update to the unlawful restraint of dog ordinance in HSC Chapter 821. Senate Bill 5 amended HSC to repeal Subchapter D and add a new Subchapter E.

The updated subchapter includes additional definitions and further identifies the requirements for adequate shelter and proper restraint.

For more information, you can review the updated subchapters here:

<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/HS/htm/HS.821.htm>

Please keep in mind that Region 8 cannot make any interpretations of these changes, and for further questions regarding how these changes will impact your agency, please contact your legal counsel.

ACO Manual Online

Reminder that the ACO Training Manual is available for free on the DSHS website. Updates to the manual are posted and represented by dates in parenthesis besides each chapter.

[ACO Manual Online](#)



CE Announcements

Virtual CE Courses

See below for upcoming Continuing Education (CE) opportunities hosted by DSHS Region 8 Zoonosis Team:

Vector-Borne Disease and Public Health Seminar

March 30, 2021

1:00pm—5:00pm

4-hour virtual CE course on the role of public health professionals and vector-borne diseases. Topics include:

- Vector-borne diseases in Texas
- Vector Identification & Surveillance
- Trapping, Abatement & Prevention Basics

To Register, visit the following link:

[PHR8 Zoonosis VBD Seminar](#)

ACO Basic Course

April 20-22, 2022

DSHS Region 8 will host an ACO Basic Course on April 20-22, 2022. The course instruction will be via a virtual platform on the 1st and 2nd days, with the in-person testing in San Antonio on the 3rd day.

To Register, contact Jon Stewart at:

jonathan.stewart@dshs.texas.gov / 210-949-2046

CE Waiver Updates

CE Waiver Termination

Effective September 1, 2021, the ACO CE waiver was terminated. The following training and CE requirements for ACOs and euthanasia technicians are no longer suspended:

- [TAC 169.84\(g\)](#)
- [Texas HSC 821.055\(a\) and \(d\)](#)
- [Texas HSC 829.002\(1\)\(A\) and \(2\)\(A\)](#)
- [Texas HSC 829.004\(a\) and \(b\)](#)

Online CE Policy

DSHS policy has been that a maximum of 10 hours per 3-year period can be obtained via DSHS approved online/virtual training. Due to the waivers and COVID pandemic, DSHS modified the policy to allow up to 30 hours of online/virtual training per 3-year period. This policy extension remains in effect until **August 31, 2022**.

For More ACO CE Course Information:
<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/idcu/health/zoonosis/education/training/aco/>

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