

Region 8 Zoonosis Control Newsletter

June 2021

Public Health Region 8 | Zoonosis Control

Texas Department of State Health Services

dshs.texas.gov/region8/zoonosis | Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Getting Back to Business	1
Zoonosis News	1
Rabies Update	2
Disease Spotlight: SARS-CoV-2	3
ACO Training Waiver Update	4
Announcements	4

Getting Back to Business

By Dr. Amanda Kieffer

After many months of unprecedented and continued response activities due to COVID-19, Region 8 Zoonosis is making efforts to find to a new normal. Throughout this past year and still today, our team has been working on COVID-19 surveillance, contact tracing, technical assistance, infection control guidance, and more. Despite the pandemic, we have continued to conduct zoonotic disease investigations, inspections, consultations and other tasks. The ACO training waivers and various restrictions have kept us from hosting courses, but we are looking forward to seeing you all soon, virtually or in person! Wishing you all a safe and happy summer.

Zoonosis News

Zoonosis Team Welcomes Jon Stewart and Linda Lopez Herrera

In October of 2020, we were happy to welcome Jon Stewart as our Zoonosis Public Health and Prevention Specialist and Linda Lopez-Herrera as our Zoonosis COVID Contractor. Welcome to the Region 8 Zoo Crew, Jon & Linda!

Jon Stewart

A graduate from New York Medical College, Jonathan finished his Master of Public Health degree in August of 2020 at which point he also successfully completed an eight-year career in the US Navy as a Corpsman. Jon is originally from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida with Trinidadian roots, but has spent the last eight years moving from coast to coast. His last orders were to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina where he worked in various roles, most recently with their preventive medicine department. Jon enjoys hiking, camping, soccer, and karaoke. He has recently relocated to San Antonio with his wife, Audrey, and their 4 animals.

Linda Lopez Herrera

Linda is currently pursuing her Bachelors in English Communications at St. Mary's University. She has spent the last 16 years working with children in different settings, including assisting special needs children and their families to secure funding for customized durable medical equipment, as well as helping providers to meet the psychological and psychiatric needs of children and families in the foster care and CPS system all over Texas. Linda was born and raised in San Antonio and currently lives with her husband, 8 of their 11 children, one dog, one hermit crab, and one fish. When she is not attending children's sports or school activities, Linda enjoys attending her husband's basketball games, playing volleyball, barbecues, trips to any waterfront, and basically any family time with all or some of the children.



*Linda Lopez-Herrera & Jon Stewart
Join the Region 8 Zoonosis Team*

Rabies Update

By Trevor Maness

2020 Rabies Summary

In 2020, the majority of animals testing positive for rabies were Bats (53%). Skunks and Raccoons made up the next largest groups of positive animals at 24% and 11%, respectively. Foxes and cats made up the smallest groups of positive animals at 9% and 3%, respectively. Region 8 also had one sheep test positive for rabies in 2020. For statewide data, including maps, visit:

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/idcu/disease/rabies.aspx>.

2020 Rabies Cases in Animals, Region 8 January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

County	Bat	Cat	Dog	Skunk	Raccoon	Fox	Other ¹	Total
Bandera					2	2		4
Bexar	36			1				37
Comal	3	3		3	8	6		23
Dewitt				1				1
Gillespie	1							1
Gonzales	5			12				17
Kendall	1			1				2
Kerr	2				1	1	1	5
Lavaca	1			6				7
Medina	2							2
Victoria	1							1
Val Verde	1							1
Wilson	2							2
TOTALS	55	3	0	24	11	9	1	103

¹ Sheep

Quarterly Rabies Update: January – June 2021

Between January and June of 2021, bats made up 44% of all positive rabies reports, skunks made up 31% of all positive rabies reports, foxes made up 13%, and cats and raccoons each made up 6% of all positive rabies reports.

2021 Rabies Cases in Animals, Region 8 January 1, 2021 - June 1, 2021

County	Bat	Cat	Dog	Skunk	Raccoon	Fox	Other	Total
Bexar	5							5
Comal		1		1	1	2		5
DeWitt				1				1
Gonzales	2			3				5
Kerr	1							1
Lavaca				1				1
Medina	1							1
Victoria	1							1
TOTALS	10	1	0	6	1	2	0	20

Disease Spotlight: SARS-CoV-2 in Animals

By Dr. Amanda Kieffer

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is primarily a virus affecting humans. Since the beginning of the outbreak, there have been a small number of animals that have tested positive for COVID-19 worldwide. However, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading the virus to people. Here are some important facts:

- SARS-CoV-2 spreads easily from person to person
- The risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is low
- The virus can spread from people to animals, typically after close contact with an infected person
- The most common species of reported animal infections include mink, cats, and dogs.
- Routine animal testing for COVID-19 is not recommended
- As of April 15, 2021, there have been 90 animals confirmed positive with SARS-CoV-2 in Texas.

SARS-CoV-2 Positive Animals, Texas

Animal Type	Cases
Cat	39
Dog	45
Tiger	4
Lion	1
Cougar	1
TOTAL	90

www.aphis.usda.gov/, Data as of April 15, 2021

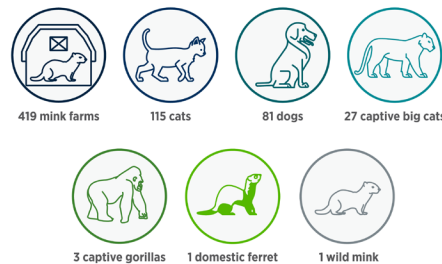
Testing Guidance

Considerations for animal testing should include veterinarian evaluation to rule out other common causes of similar diseases. Testing in animals may be warranted if a symptomatic animal has had close contact with a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, or an unusual disease pattern presents in a shelter, boarding facility, or zoo. Imported animals presenting with clinical signs should also be considered for testing.

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) provides consultation and guidance on testing criteria. If you are a veterinarian needing further guidance on testing animals for SARS-CoV-2, please call your [TAHC Region office](#). The Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory ([TVMDL](#)) can provide additional guidance on sampling and shipping samples. Commercial laboratories also provide testing options. Positive results will be confirmed at the National Veterinary Services Laboratory and are reported to TAHC and DSHS.

SARS-CoV-2 infections in animals

Since the initial outbreak of COVID-19, multiple countries have reported infections of SARS-CoV-2 in nonhuman animals, in addition to in people. This is a global snapshot of the reported cases of naturally acquired SARS-CoV-2 infections in animals.



Sources: World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, ProMED, February 9, 2021.

<https://www.avma.org/>, Data as of Feb 9, 2021

Symptoms in Animals

Domestic animals do not typically show severe signs of disease and are often asymptomatic. Symptoms, when present, often mimic respiratory disease and can include:

- Fever
- Coughing
- Difficulty Breathing
- Lethargy
- Sneezing
- Nasal Discharge

Recommendations for Animal Owners

- ✓ Limit pet interactions with people or pets outside the household
- ✓ If you are sick with COVID-19, limit or avoid contact with pets
- ✓ Practice healthy habits around pets and other animals, such as hand washing and proper waste disposal
- ✓ Contact your veterinarian if your pet is showing unusual symptoms or you have concerns about their health



ACO Training Waiver Update

By Jon Stewart

On May 14, 2020, the Office of the Governor issued a waiver temporarily suspending Chapter 829 training requirements for animal control officers (ACOs). An extension to this waiver was granted on August 10th, 2020 and remains in effect until terminated by the Governors' office.

Following the continuance of this disaster declaration, DSHS has extended the CE exception period to coincide with the dates of the ACO training waiver.

For more information on the waiver please visit the [DSHS-Related Waivers page](#) and/or the [DSHS ACO Training page](#).

When the waiver is lifted, our staff will be available to help you understand the new deadlines. Please submit any specific questions to Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov.

DSHS Region 8 ACO Basic Course

We have set a tentative goal for September 2021 to provide the ACO Basic Course with exam and hope to provide confirmation soon. For updates on current course offerings statewide, please see the [DSHS ACO training course schedule](#). Subscribers to this newsletter will receive an email announcement when our course is posted.

Information on the ACO course registration process can be located on the DSHS [ACO Training Information](#) page, or by contacting DSHS Region 8.

Announcements

CE Needs Survey

Please follow the link below to complete a survey to help us better assess the Continuing Education (CE) needs of our Region 8 stakeholders.

[CE Needs Survey](#)

Hurricane Season

Hurricane Season has officially begun and runs from June 1st – November 30th. Do you have disaster response plans in place for your facility or animals? A few quick tips on planning ahead for keeping you and the animals in your care safe:

1. Know Your Community's Resources
2. Write Your Personal Disaster Plan
3. Create a Disaster Supply Kit

Below are some helpful resources to help you prepare:

- [DSHS Animals in Disasters](#)
- [TAHC Disaster Resources](#)
- [TAMU VET - Be Prepared](#)
- [CDC - Pet Safety in Emergencies](#)
- [USDA – Protecting Livestock](#)
- [AVMA - Pets and disasters](#)
- [AVMA - Preparedness for Vets](#)
- [ASPCA - Sample Disaster Plans](#)

Contact Us:

Amanda Kieffer

Zoonosis Control Veterinarian
210-949-2048

Trevor Maness

Program Specialist
210-949-2165

Jon Stewart

Public Health & Prevention Specialist
210-949-2046

Public Health Region 8 | Zoonosis Control

Texas Department of State Health Services

dshs.texas.gov/region8/zoonosis | Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov

7430 Louis Pasteur Drive

San Antonio, TX 78229

210-949-2000 (Main Office)

210-692-1457 (Fax)

210-949-2121 (24/7 Reporting Line)



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

**Texas Department of State
Health Services**