

Extension shopper article for 7-21-15

Rabies cases rise in Kansas

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The Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Animal Health has identified an increased number of rabies cases reported in Kansas this year. As of June 30, 69 cases of rabies have been confirmed in Kansas for 2015.

Rabies testing is performed by the Kansas State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, which confirmed only 69 positive cases in all of 2014. Of the 69 cases reported this year, 13 of them occurred in domestic animals including nine cattle and four cats. These numbers are expected to continue to rise through the end of the year.

Dr. Bill Brown, Kansas Animal Health Commissioner, urged Kansans to be alert. "Being observant of erratic behavior in wildlife or livestock is important," he said. "Pet owners are urged to follow best practices and vaccinate their pets to prevent this devastating disease."

Rabies is a preventable disease that is always deadly and can infect humans. To prevent the impact of the disease, it is important to vaccinate all animals that have regular human contact. This includes pets such as dogs, cats and ferrets, horses, and any livestock that has human contact or is of high value. If you are bitten by an animal, wash the wound immediately with soap and water, seek medical attention and report the bite to your local health or animal control department.

"It is important to remember that animals need periodic boosters of rabies vaccine throughout their life," said Dr. Ingrid Garrison, state public health veterinarian with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. "Vaccinating animals against rabies not only protects our pets, but our families too."

In addition to vaccination, it is important to watch for signs of rabies such as changes in animal behavior. Common signs of rabies include wild animals acting unafraid of people, calm animals acting aggressive and hostile, inability to swallow, increased salivation, seizures and paralysis.

If you notice any animals exhibiting signs of rabies, keep your distance and contact animal control. In the case an animal has been exposed to rabies, contact your veterinarian for advice.