

December 2012

Inside this issue:

Doc's Desk

As 2012 draws to a close, we are blessed in the Region to have had less disease activity than usual concerning rabies, plague, tularemia and other zoonoses. The only real increase this year was in the West Nile virus activity. While it was more than expected, it paled in comparison to HSR 2/3 in the DFW area.

Before engaging in a discussion of the year's disease events, I want to mention issues concerning animal shelter and quarantining animals for rabies observation. There is an article in this issue that goes into detail on these topics. Please be sure to read it if you are involved with shelters or rabies observation. Legal and animal welfare groups are watching and are seeking out those facilities that do not do a good job, in their opinion. If your shelter is not meeting the standards set forth in our laws and rules, it would be a good idea to consider improvements, repairs or replacement. It may seem daunting, but others are leading the way. The cities of Tulia, Hereford and Floydada have just either completed, or will soon complete new structures. Farwell, Lubbock, Spur and Perryton have also completed new shelters in the past few years. The citizens of Pampa passed a large bond issue this year to enable that city to begin building a new animal shelter soon. Some shelters have a lot of bells and whistles, but many have been relatively low cost to build but are quite functional and meet the minimum standards for shelters. If your shelter, or the shelter in the town where you live is in need of improving or replacing, I encourage you begin exploring

the feasibility of accomplishing the task.

Recently, Tonya contacted most, if not all, of the towns in our Region that were not known to operate a quarantine facility. We found some shelters we did not know existed as well as a few that claimed to be quarantining bite animals. Be aware, the operation of a quarantine facility that is not approved by the agency is a Class C misdemeanor. If you desire to quarantine at your facility but have not yet sought approval, please contact us and we'll visit your structure to see if it meets the legal standards. If it does not, needed improvements will be discussed. Please be sure to read the separate article in this issue for more details on animal shelters and quarantine facilities.

Now for an update on the disease issues pertinent to our Region in 2012. Our last confirmed rabies case (number 10 for 2012) was reported on July 17. This is far different than last year when case 65 was reported on 12/28/11.

Our 10 cases were distributed among five counties (Donley County – 1 skunk; Lamb County – 1 horse, 1 skunk; Parmer County – 3 skunks; Potter County – 1 cat, 1 skunk; Randall County – 2 skunks). If we do not receive meaningful precipitation this winter and spring, the skunk population probably will not increase and subsequently, our rabies case numbers will most likely not increase significantly next year. Snow and/or rain could change those predictions, though.

It will be interesting to see how plague and tularemia will fare if the drought continues. On one hand there will be more stress on the reservoirs which could bring about some disease induced die-offs. But if lack of moisture continues to reduce prairie dog and rabbit/hare populations, the disease agents will also be affected.

The gray fox/coyote Oral Rabies Vaccination Programs will begin in early January, 2013. The programs have been so effective (last canine rabies variant detected in March 2004; last fox rabies variant detected in June 2009) that the 2013 program will consist of only a barrier zone baited along the Rio Grande River. For a comparison with the territory covered in earlier years please go to:

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/rabies/orvp/information/maps/>

In the last issue, mention was made of the pilot project for a skunk Oral Rabies Vaccination Program in Fort Bend County. Samples are still being collected in the project area, but until the necessary numbers are collected and analyzed, we won't know how effective the program might be.

Even though rabies activity is very low in HSR 1, please continue to enlighten pet owners of the law (and the dictates of common sense) for rabies vaccinations and livestock owners of the advisability to vaccinate certain animals. Due to the confusion that distemper in dogs can cause with respect to rabies diagnosis,

Continued on page 2

Doc's Desk	1
Doc's Desk Continued	2
Winter Pet Care	3
Quarantine or Impound Rules	4
Sanitation	5
Sanitation Continued	6

HSR 1 ZONOSIS STAFF

James Alexander, DVM, MPVM
Regional Veterinarian
james.alexander@dshs.state.tx.us

Tonya Finch
Public Health Prevention Specialist
tonya.finch@dshs.state.tx.us

300 Victory Drive
WTAMU Box 60968
Canyon, TX 79016-0968
806-655-7151
806-655-7159(Fax)

Karen McDonald, MS
Zoonosis Control Specialist
karen.mcdonald@dshs.state.tx.us

6302 Lola Avenue
Lubbock, TX 79424
806-783-6422
806-783-6435 (Fax)

Continued from page 1

I still strongly encourage dog owners to be sure their animals receive a distemper vaccination in addition to rabies at a minimum. In early December a dog exhibiting symptoms compatible with distemper, as well as rabies, bit an Animal Control Officer. The dog had also potentially exposed four children in the family. Due to timing of the bite late on a Wednesday and bus schedules, it was about 11:20 on Saturday before everyone could breathe easier when the dog was reported as rabies negative. Perhaps a distemper vaccination could have prevented that ordeal and expense.

As mentioned above certain livestock should be vaccinated, also. With livestock shows occurring, it is important to vaccinate project animals against rabies due to the frequent human contact they have. As always, horses with a lot of human contact should be vaccinated. You may recall the incident in March of this year when a horse used in a high school rodeo developed rabies. Only five family members were exposed, which was expensive enough, but it could have been worse. Another reason to vaccinate horses against rabies, as well as the encephalitic diseases is the cost of disposing of a dead horse. Vaccinations could prove to be a relatively low cost method of preventing a large disposal fee.

The WNV phenomenon that hit the state in 2012 was discussed in the last newsletter. With the advent of cold weather in HSR 1, the occurrence of recently acquired West Nile virus (WNV) infections should be over. However, we are still receiving reports of human and equine infections that were contracted earlier in the season but are just now being diagnosed. The unseasonably warm weather allowed WNV transmission to continue beyond what would normally be the end of the WNV season. A horse that became symptomatic in late November from the western Panhandle was reported positive on December 10th.

In HSR 1, we currently have 9 confirmed horse cases in 6 counties (cases/fatal): Bailey (1/0); Dallam (1/1); Donley (1/1); Gray (1/0), Lubbock (1/0); and Randall (4/2). Of course, these numbers are subject to change as more reports arrive. For current statewide case information, go to www.txWestNile.org.

The 2013 WNV season should be interesting. I have not yet heard of any predictions, but it is a safe assumption that the virus will remain active to some degree. Plan now to prepare for that by getting your equine stock vaccinated early enough for them to have immunity when the mosquito season begins.

Thus far, the new swine influenza virus has not been reported in Texas and its activity in the mid-west seems to have tapered off. But seasonal influenza has increased in activity so anyone with swine contact should definitely see a physician if an influenza-like illness (ILI) develops. Surveillance is the only way a new strain that jumps from swine to humans can be detected early. Also, humans with an ILI should avoid contact with swine while in a contagious period. Swine are susceptible to some human influenza strains and might mix the viruses into a new variant that could be more severe when it next enters a human.

We hope that 2012 was a good year for you and that 2013 will be more promising than Congress is leading us to believe.



Happy New Year

Winter Pet Care from the American Humane Association

When it's cold outside, extra precautions are required to ensure your pet's well-being. Follow these tips to keep your pet warm and cozy during these chilly months.

The outdoor factor

- Cats can get frostbite, and many seek warmth by crawling into car engines, which can be dangerous or fatal. Cats should be kept indoors year-round.
- Dogs also should be kept inside if possible. If kept outside, they should have a draft-free shelter large enough to stand and turn around in, yet small enough to retain body heat. Use a layer of straw or other bedding material to help insulate your pet against the cold. Different breeds of dogs have different sheltering needs. Purchase a commercially produced doghouse, or contact your local humane society for construction plans for a doghouse suitable for your climate. Please be sure to contact your veterinarian if you have questions.
- After letting your pet out to relieve herself, be sure to wipe her paws when she comes back inside. Tender pads can be injured from salts and other ice-melting chemicals. These products can be irritating to skin and mouth. Signs of ingestion include excessive drooling, vomiting, and depression. Outdoor animals typically need more calories in the winter. This allows their body to produce body heat. Increase the amount you feed your pet if she is allowed to go outside. Indoor-only animals may actually need fewer calories to avoid weight gain.

Watch what your pet ingests

- Batteries contain corrosives that, if bitten or swallowed, can cause ulceration in your pet's mouth, tongue, and gastrointestinal tract.
 - Antifreeze is deadly to pets. The sweet taste is irresistible to animals kept in the garage in colder months. Look for "safe" non-toxic antifreeze and make sure all spills are cleaned immediately and thoroughly. Contact your veterinarian immediately if you suspect your pet may have ingested any antifreeze!
 - Winter typically is the cold and flu season. Medications as basic as aspirin can be harmful and dangerous to pets. Do not medicate your animal yourself unless under the direction of your veterinarian. Keep all prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs out of animals reach.
- Rat and mouse killers are used more frequently during the winter months. Place these products in areas that are inaccessible to your pet.

If you suspect your pet has gotten into a [potentially poisonous substance](#), call your veterinarian immediately! Have the telephone number to your local emergency animal hospital readily available.

DSHS FREE PUBLICATIONS

Those who have access to the internet can order DSHS publications online. The Zoonosis Control Branch has pamphlets on a variety of topics, such as mosquito control, rabies, animal bites, plague, encephalitis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and tick borne diseases. You can search for publications by title, subject, keyword, language, format or publications number, and pamphlets will be shipped to you at no cost.

To order pamphlets online, visit the website:

<http://webds.dshs.state.tx.us/mamd/litcat/default.asp>

If you have any questions, please call Tonya at (806) 655-7151.

Quarantine or Impound, the Rules are the Same

Karen McDonald, HSR-I

As mentioned in *Doc's Desk*, Doc, Tonya and I have seen an increase in shelter complaints over the last few years. Some complainants have been dog owners whose animals were kept in filthy conditions, and others were just concerned citizens who were fed up with the lack of interest in the condition of their city shelter and called us for help. Our authority is limited here so we often refer them to the city manager's office or send out suggestions for correcting certain problems. In some cases, if time allows, we have been able to do site visits and offer suggestions for improvements. (We've been rather shocked by some of the facilities we've looked at.) Shelter site visits are not standard practice for us though. Currently, along with our myriad of other state-mandated public health duties, we in Health Service Region I already inspect 29 rabies quarantine facilities in accordance with Texas Health and Safety Code (THSC) 826, a handful of which are actually veterinary clinics under contract for the service. Tonya recently spent a great deal of time updating our records by calling city personnel throughout the region and inquiring as to what, if any, animal control program existed in their area. The results revealed or confirmed the operation of **70+** animal shelters in HSR I, from the very basic to the very elaborate in design. If we received a call on your facility and took the time for a site visit, what would we find? Are you even aware of what your facility is supposed to have according to state law?

For the quarantine facilities that we do inspect, a Z-3 form, "Inspection for Rabies Quarantine Facilities and Impoundment/Shelter Facilities" is used covering everything from the shelter's construction, to food storage, to pest control and sanitation. Everything on the form comes straight from the *Texas Administrative Codes (TAC) 169.26, Facilities for the Quarantining or Impounding of Animals*. This is the section of the law (the Board rules) that **all** animal impoundment facilities, regardless of their county size, are required to comply with. The same form, therefore, is used by local veterinarians when inspecting animal shelters that meet the minimum county size requirement of $\geq 75,000$ (THSC 823). To see what is required review TAC 169.26. It can be accessed through the domain name of www.txaco.org. Select "Officer Training", then "Manual", then "On-line Manual" and then "Texas Laws". Finally select "Texas Administrative Code 169, Rabies Control and Eradication". These are the Board's rules for Rabies Control and Eradication. Shelter standards are found in 169.26.

If you determine that your facility is substandard, or if there are critical repairs that haven't yet been addressed, do not wait for a citizen complaint to spur you into action. Change takes time and it may require an expansion of your current budget. Start the planning now.

Another surprise Tonya had during her many calls was the admission that some city shelters were quarantining bite animals without approval, which is illegal. We realize that it is easier to place a bite animal into an open pen and watch it for 10 days without seeking State approval, but it's simply not allowed. TAC 169.28 requires a facility that quarantines bite animals to have a written standard operating procedure, follow the caging requirements outlined in the law, have the structural plans reviewed by the State prior to construction, and again, be inspected annually. A certificate signed by the Regional Veterinarian is issued each year by the State upon completion of a successful inspection and must be posted within the facility. Without State approval, the officer in authority must find another approved facility or allow the animal to be housed with the pet owner's veterinarian, if the vet agrees. Failing to secure it in an approved facility, the biting animal must be euthanatized and sent off for testing to the state lab.

Failure to comply with any section of TAC 169 is a Class C misdemeanor; moreover, maintaining a substandard shelter could lead to some unfavorable news coverage and outside pressure for immediate costly changes. We have seen that happen. The bottom line here is that these procedures are in place to protect human health and to protect the welfare of the animals that are in your care for a short time. These animals are pets and pets are often considered family. Take good care of them.

**Sanitation Complaints**

Karen McDonald, HSR 1

This is an article I wrote for the December 2010 newsletter and it addressed the issue of common deficiencies found with shelter sanitation during the course of inspections. Since this is an on-going problem, we thought it worth reprinting in this issue.

"Sanitation is achieving and maintaining a clean environment. An animal control officer's environment includes the truck, shelter, and equipment. Keeping a clean and sanitary environment will decrease odors and disease transmission, increase public appreciation, and reflect the pride and professionalism of the animal control agency." This is the introduction to the chapter on sanitation in the Zoonosis Control *Animal Control Officer Training Manual*. The majority of the complaints that Zoonosis Control receives on animal shelters has to do with poor sanitation. I'm pleased to say that we don't receive many complaints, but of the ones we do, filthiness is the primary issue. Moreover, the quarantine facility inspections often turn up issues with basic cleanliness, or a lack thereof. This is one of the easiest complaints to correct, or prevent altogether.

Outside runs and grounds:

The first view that the public has of the animal shelter is the exterior. Understandably, there will be fecal piles in the run first thing in the morning and mid-afternoon after feeding. However, finding two-days worth of fecal material dried in the outside runs is not only unsightly and smelly, but a clear indication that someone has neglected their duties. It is particularly telling in a run where no animal is present; obviously a dog was removed and the officer never took the time to clean the run. Texas Codes Annotated Chapter 169.26. Facilities for the Quarantining or Impounding of Animals, Section (d) (1) states that waste will be removed not less than daily. With multiple dogs to a pen, or if the shelter uses self-feeders, a twice-daily cleaning is recommended. Certainly a pen should be cleaned immediately upon an animal's removal. If solid waste is being scraped or sprayed onto the ground with a high-pressure hose, this is a direct violation of Section (3) which says the premises shall be kept clean as well. Solid waste should be scraped up for proper disposal before washing the run. The grounds are cleaner, odor-free, and it saves the city on drain maintenance calls.

Drains:

Several facilities in the region have open drains that run the length of the pens with grates covering them to prevent large items, paws and pups from falling in. (At least they're supposed to be covered.) In some cases officers have merely scraped the solids (feces, vomit, and food) into the drains and left it sitting there, as unsightly as it would be in the pen and producing just as much odor for anyone walking nearby. After removing the solids, flush the drains periodically with water to rinse away any standing liquid waste. During one inspection a fecal pile was spotted with pieces of heavy black cord in it that a dog had chewed and passed. It needed to be shoveled up and disposed of in the trash. Cat rooms will have spilled litter on the floor that should be swept up prior to mopping. Flushing such items down the drain will eventually result in a costly maintenance call.

Standing Water:

169.26 (a) (12) (C) states that primary enclosures shall enable the animal to remain dry and clean. Complaints of soaking wet animals, puppies frozen to the floor in the winter, and the inability for a citizen to walk through the facility and keep their shoes dry are all clear indications of improper washing. Animals should be removed from runs or placed on the other side of the guillotine doors during the wash down. Standing water, both in the runs as well as on the walkways, should be removed with a squeegee. Standing water promotes bacterial growth and disease and odor transmission. It also provides an unsafe walking surface for the ACOs and the public. Continues on Page 6



300 Victory Drive
 WTAMU Box 60968
 Canyon, TX 79016-0968
 Phone: 806-655-7151
 Fax: 806-655-7159

E-mail: james.alexander@dshs.state.tx.us

Dallam	Sherman	Hansford	Ochiltree	Lipscomb	
Hartley	Moore	Hutchinson	Roberts	Hemphill	
Oldham	Patterson	Carson	Gray	Wheeler	
Deaf Smith	Randall	Armstrong	Danley	Collingsworth	
Parmer	Castro	Swisher	Briscoe	Hall	Childress
Bailey	Lamb	Hale	Floyd	Motley	
Cochran	Heckley	Lubbock	Crosby	Dickens	King
Yeakum	Terry	Lynn	Garza		

Continued from page 5

Office and/or reception area:

At some facilities the runs are well maintained, yet the office and/or reception area is completely neglected. There may be a desk and cabinet haphazardly pushed against a bare wall with a layer of dust and fly carcasses covering both. Cobwebs have collected in the ceiling corners, and the floor is covered with dirt, grass, and anything else that could possibly be tracked in. What would you think walking into a business office that looked that way? An animal shelter is not a bank or a department store, but it is a city office that provides a service to the public. Greet your public the way you would like to be greeted. Remove the cobwebs, dust, sweep, and mop weekly when you have time between calls. I recently visited a facility that had repainted, had clean floors, and put posters up on the wall. What a difference! Any citizen entering the shelter would be more comfortable sitting down and conducting business with those officers.

Picking up the animals is just a small portion of your job duties. You have, at a minimum, three days that you are responsible for the welfare of the animals you take in. They deserve to be clean and comfortable. As for the citizens, they are at the shelter for an even shorter time. Leave them with a favorable impression, when possible. From the introduction to the ACO training manual, *"Gaining the respect of the people in the community is the first step in getting public support and cooperation for the animal control agency."* Housing their animals in a clean building is the first step in gaining that respect.

Rabies Awareness & Prevention Poster Contest

Texas students in Kindergarten through 8th grade are eligible to participate

Deadline: **February 22, 2013**

For more information please contact:

Bonny Mayes (512) 776-2888 bonny.mayes@dshs.state.tx.us or

Ernest "Skip" Oertli (512) 776-3306 ernest.oertli@dshs.state.tx.us