

DOC'S DESK

We closed 2014 with even fewer confirmed cases of rabies in HSR 1 than in 2013 and conversely, an even greater amount of West Nile virus (WNV) activity than the prior year. The continued lull in rabies activity has been greatly appreciated, but the WNV activity seems to have been a by-product of much needed rain we received in the later part of the summer and early fall.

There were only three rabies cases confirmed: Donley Co. (2 bats – April and August) and Randall Co. (1 horse – September). I continue to believe this low incidence may be attributed to the population reduction in 2011 when we had 65 confirmed cases and the subsequent, long-term drought that reduced food sources. The rains that began in the latter part of 2014 and are continuing appear to be benefiting the skunk populations. I have been seeing more dead skunks on the roads compared to the last few years when a dead skunk was a rare sight.

Since the population appears to be rebounding, it is very important that skunk reproduction be discouraged by not leaving pet food out at night. An abundance of food will enhance the reproductive capacity of skunks and lead to an abundance of skunks which will then lead, eventually, to an abundance of rabies. The statewide rabies case total for 2014 has not been finalized so a report for that activity will be provided in a future newsletter. However, approximate figures indicate that the total statewide for the year may be in excess of 1120. That is around 7% more than our previous high year of

1,049 in 2002, and an increase of about 20% over the total of 937 for 2013.

The increase in average rainfall in HSR 1 from 2012 to 2013 was just over two inches, but from 2013 to 2014 the amount was seven inches higher. As a result, we had more mosquito breeding opportunities and more WNV cases. Our totals for 2013 were 31 cases of West Nile Fever (WF) and 27 cases of West Nile Neurological Disease (WNND), while the 2014 unofficial case totals increased to 36 WF and 38 WNND. More information may be accessed at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/arboviral/>

The 21st Oral Rabies Vaccination Program (ORVP) distribution in Texas occurred last month. Tonya Finch was our only team member to participate this year. The airplanes operated out of airports at Brenham, Del Rio, Alpine, Zapata, and Brady. The last documented case of Texas Fox (TF) rabies occurred in a cow on May 2013 in SE Concho County. No other cases have been detected since then, indicating the cow may have been infected some years ago and was a long incubator of the disease (a phenomenon that has been documented in a few humans). Since the date of exposure is rarely known in animals that are pastured, it is impossible to know for sure when this cow was exposed, but if it was some years before, that provides us with greater confidence the TF variant is not extant in Texas wildlife, at present. We did have a scare in December when a rabid fox was found in El Paso, Texas. Since there is an Arizona Fox variant that has been moving eastward across New Mexico, and the TF variant had been detected in previous years in counties east of El Paso, we were all relieved when the fox was found to be infected with the Mexican free-tailed bat variant. In addition

to continuing the maintenance zone along the Rio Grande and the area around the cow's location, the "proof of concept" ORV for skunks continued again this year. Detailed information on the ORVP may be found at www.TexasORVP.org.

Overseas, H5N1 avian influenza is resurging in Egypt and a few other countries in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. For the first time ever, a human H5N1 case occurred in North America. A young woman visited China in late 2013 and died on January 4, 2014 in Canada due to H5N1. In late January, it was announced that a teal killed by a hunter in the state of Washington, was infected with an H5N1 variant. It was genetically different than the strains affecting the Eastern Hemisphere, but it shows that wild birds can spread influenza variants from one hemisphere to another.

The H7N9 avian influenza continues to infect people in China. Recently, it was imported into Canada by a couple who visited China. So far, no transmission beyond those people has occurred.

A highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N8 strain has also shown up in the US this year in domestic poultry on the West Coast, as well as in wild birds along the coast and a few other western states. To our disappointment, the future looks strong for avian influenzas.

The MERS coronavirus originating in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia still has the majority of cases) also remains active and has been increasing in activity recently after a recent lull. Testing of camels has clouded the issue as to what is the true reservoir of the disease.

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Some studies show a high probability camels are the source, while other analyses and the lack of animal exposure in many human cases have cast doubt on that theory.

As I write this column, the temperature is about 80° in Canyon, but that will not continue for very long. We have had a lot of cold fronts this year with some very bitter conditions. Please be sure to provide extra food, water, shelter, bedding, etc. for outdoor pets as needed.

Since our skunk population is most likely growing, be sure to remind folks to maintain current rabies vaccinations for their pets. Once the weather warms up as spring approaches, the skunks will begin moving and may encounter some pets. In addition, the rabid horse in Randall County last year was infected by a skunk strain and sounds an alarm for livestock owners. Please remind livestock owners that their animals should be evaluated for rabies vaccination. Value, frequency of human contact, cost of disposal, etc. are all factors to consider in the benefit/cost analysis to decide whether or not to vaccinate a given animal that is not required by law to be immunized.

With livestock show season upon us, it is extremely important to be sure show animals are vaccinated. There is no rabies vaccine approved for swine and that species is rarely found to be infected with rabies. However, a pig has been found to be rabid in Texas as well as in the mid-west. If there is a desire to vaccinate a pig to enhance the safety of its handlers, I recommend using the rabies vaccine with the widest range of approved species on its label.

This year is starting out well with increased moisture and decreased gas prices. If it wasn't for the strife in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, things would be looking very bright. We hope conditions in your lives are on the positive side of the ledger.

2015 Rabies Awareness & Prevention Poster Contest Information:

The Texas Department of State Health Services would like to invite the kids at your school to participate in a Rabies Awareness & Prevention Poster Contest. Rabies is a viral disease that kills over 50,000 people every year around the world. Human deaths from rabies in the United States are very rare (*approximately one death per year, almost exclusively due to rabies associated with bats*). This is due to strict animal control laws, widespread pet vaccinations, and public health intervention in identified rabies-exposure cases. Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis is 100% effective when administered properly. However, the treatment is very expensive and requires multiple shots over a period of time.

Skunks and bats are the most commonly affected species in Texas. Private residences and school grounds are the most common locations in Texas for exposure to rabid bats. Bat bites are not always noticeable and many people are unaware that exposure to bats poses a risk. Most of these rabies exposures are preventable through education. This is why we are encouraging school kids throughout Texas to become more aware about rabies and respecting bats and other wildlife from a distance. Children at your school can participate by entering a contest to design a poster promoting rabies awareness & prevention. There are prizes for students in Kindergarten through 8th grade, and artwork from top-ranking posters may be used for future state sponsored public health educational projects. Prizes are provided by the *Zach Jones Memorial Fund* www.zachjonesmemorial.org/.

Please forward this information to the teachers in your school and encourage them to involve their students. This would be a perfect activity for schools participating in C-Scope as an informational text or procedural text assignment or as an excellent extra-credit project for an art or science class. Provided online is an information sheet for students and a teacher instruction sheet with details and an entry form www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/rabies/information/contest/. The **deadline** for poster submission is **April 6, 2015**. If you are interested and need additional information, feel free to contact Ms. Bonny Mayes directly. Thank you!

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TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES – ZOOONOSIS CONTROL BRANCH
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Lubbock Animal Services
will be hosting the next

**Texas Department of State Health Services HSR 1
Animal Control Officer Basic Training Course**

on

March 24-25, 2015

at the Vector Control Building

(next to the old Animal Services on Ash Ave.)

102 E Municipal Drive

Lubbock, Texas

This two-day class will consist of 12 hours of lecture, video and guest speaker presentations that will assist attendees in their comprehension of the study material for the state exam on the second day. The cost to register is \$75.

Questions for the exam will come from the DSHS [Animal Control Officer Training Manual](#), so it is advised that attendees purchase one, though it is not required. An order form is attached if needed, along with the class registration form. To register, fax the completed form to **Ms. Tonya Finch** in the Canyon office and call to verify that it was received. The deadline to register is **Monday, February 23rd, 2015**, but we will still take registrations until the class is full. Acceptance packets should be mailed out within a week of the deadline. **Do not** send payment for the course until you receive the registration packet. Manual requests, however, should be mailed in with the \$40 fee enclosed.

For more information on the course, go to <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/zoonosis/education/training/aco/>. The manual can also be found online here.

Chapter 829 of the Texas Health and Safety Code requires all ACOs to successfully complete a basic training course within one year of their date of hire. 30 hours of continuing education (CE) credit must be attained within the subsequent three year period. Those ACOs that were grandfathered in when Chapter 829 took effect on July 1, 2008, had their first three-year deadline on June 30, 2011 and their second deadline on June 30, 2014. If you failed to meet either of the deadlines, you must retake the full course and exam. It is our hope that officers will attend not just because of the legal requirement, but because it will enhance their level of professionalism, their knowledge base, and safety in the field.

If you have questions, please call Dr. James Alexander or me in the Canyon office at 806/477-1104.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Tonya Finch
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<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/zoonosis/>

**Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Zoonosis Control (ZC)
Animal Control Officer (ACO) Basic Training Course
Application to Attend**

Enrollment based on space availability. Course date you would like to attend: _____

(Please Print Clearly)

Name (Mr., Mrs., Ms.) _____ DOB _____

Animal Control/Shelter Agency Name _____

Mailing Address (Street or PO Box) _____ City _____ Zip _____

(Please provide the address where course information/materials and test results should be sent.)

Phone Number (_____) _____ Ext. _____ County _____

Email _____ Fax _____

Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Mail to:

Texas Department of State Health Services
Zoonosis Control
WTAMU Box 60968
300 Victory Drive
Canyon, TX 79016

OR FAX to:

(806) 655-6448

For more information call:

Tonya Finch (806) 655-7151 x. 1104

Cost of attending a course is \$75.00. Information on how to submit payment will be provided by the Zoonosis Control Regional office. Do not send payment with this application.

Students will be tested over the material contained in the DSHS *Animal Control Officer Training Manual*. Students should study the entire manual thoroughly prior to attending a course.

Contact your Zoonosis Control Regional office or <http://TexasZoonosis.org> for further information on the manual and how to obtain a copy.

Online CEs Available

Online training is a great way to earn continuing education credit without the inconvenience of time spent away from the office nor the expense of travel on a tight budget. They can also be taken at a time that is most convenient for the registrant's schedule and usually allow several days to weeks to complete the material.

Currently on the non-DSHS sponsored courses page on the Zoonosis Control Branch website, (www.txaco.org) besides the online review level Euthanasia Training class by Dr. Grant, (Animal Care Training) the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) lists several online courses covering topics in the areas of combating dogfighting, emergency shelter medicine, field investigational response, fundamentals of emergency sheltering and investigating animal abuse for law enforcement. For all of the classes listed, there are contact names and phone numbers to call to answer any questions you may have about them and to assist you with the registration process. To get a glimpse of what the material covers, go to the ASPCA training site at www.aspcapro.org/fir.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has also developed a curriculum designed for school Integrated Pest Management (IPM) coordinators, pest management professionals and animal control/code enforcement officers. Though the classes have not been posted on the DSHS training site, of the numerous classes they've developed, five have been approved for animal control CEs by DSHS: Ants 101, Bats 101, Mosquitoes 101, Pollinators 101 and Stinging Insects 101. Information on these classes, including the number of hours and fees, can be found at <https://txn.esslearning.com/catalogs/agrilife/>. Scroll down until you find the IPM section.

Remember, according to Chapter 829 of the Texas Health and Safety Code, of the 30 CE hours required to maintain the basic training certificate, only 10 hours maximum for each three-year period can be obtained through online courses.

Your Shelter Online

Does your agency have a link on your city's website? If so, when was the last time you looked at it? Does it offer useful up-to-date information for your citizens such as contact information for the shelter and dispatch, shelter location and hours, impound and adoption fees (if applicable) and the city animal ordinances? Take the time to review your site, (quarterly, biannually or annually,) and submit updates when the information is outdated or the site is just in need of some refreshing. If you're not sure of its effectiveness, ask family members to look for the information online. You might be surprised at their comments.

For ideas, take a look at other city websites to see how/if animal control is represented. If you like their design, take it to your supervisor to see if it would work for your city. Web design and upkeep can be time consuming, so be sure to get the appropriate approvals from city management first. The city website coordinator or "webmaster" should be consulted as well about the design.

Many have used websites successfully to increase adoptions and help citizens locate their lost pets. This requires a lot of time though, uploading photos and editing information regularly; it may not work for some. A basic page however that provides timely, helpful information and guidance for the citizens in the community can be a definite asset to the agency, reducing the number of calls that come into dispatch every day.

Attached here are links to several animal control webpages from various cities across the state of varying population sizes for your perusal:

Lubbock – found under City Government, Departments:

<http://www.ci.lubbock.tx.us/departmental-websites/departments/animal-services/home>

Amarillo – has its own tab on the city's main page. Easy to find:

<http://www.ci.amarillo.tx.us/>

City of Pampa is listed under Departments:

<http://www.cityofpampa.org/index.aspx?nid=42>

City of Irving's animal shelter is listed under Services:

<http://cityofirving.org/130/Animal-Services>

City of Cuero is listed under Departments:

<http://tx-cuero.civicplus.com/index.aspx?NID=130>



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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	Beckley	Lubbock	Crosby	Dickens	King
Vanhook	Terry	Lynn	Garza		

Please join us this May in Galveston, Texas for the 65th meeting of the James Steele Conference on Diseases in Nature Transmissible to Man. This conference provides excellent, informative presentations by local, state, national, and international experts, continuing education credits for multiple disciplines, and a great opportunity to network with colleagues and make new friends. Bring your family and enjoy all that historic Galveston has to offer!

When: Wednesday, May 20 – Friday, May 22, 2015

Continuing Education (CE) Credits:

Continuing education credits for multiple disciplines will be provided for this event.

Conference Website: For complete conference information, including a link to our new online registration page, please visit the conference website at <https://sites.google.com/site/diseasesinnature/>.

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 ext. 1104.

Navigating to the Zoonosis Branch website

Have a hard time remembering www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/zoonosis/ every time you search for information on the Zoonosis website? Well, we do too. Domain names for various areas on our site have been around for a long time and are often provided when directing individuals to specific pages. They're quick, easy-to-remember links that get you to where you want to be faster. Dr. Laura Robinson in the Austin office was kind enough to remind us of five that we use frequently. They are not case-sensitive, but some parts are capitalized to make them easier to remember:

Zoonosis Control home page: www.TexasZoonosis.org

ZC rabies home page: www.TexasRabies.org

**ZC oral rabies vaccination program home page: www.TexasORVP.org

**ZC animal control home page: www.TexasACO.org

**ZC West Nile virus home page: www.TxWestNile.org

**The last three domain names aren't currently working properly, but will be fixed soon.