

# Region 8 Zoonosis Control Newsletter

October 2021

## Public Health Region 8 | Zoonosis Control

Texas Department of State Health Services

[dshs.texas.gov/region8/zoonosis](https://dshs.texas.gov/region8/zoonosis) | [Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov)

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Falling Into Zoonosis	1
Zoonosis News	1
Rabies Update	2
Bats in Schools	2
Disease Spotlight: Typhus	2
Anthrax Outbreak 2021	2
Announcements	5
CE Waiver Updates	5

### Falling Into Zoonosis

*By Amanda Kieffer*

We have had a busy summer at Region 8, including COVID Response activities, anthrax outbreaks, and the return of Animal Control Officer training courses. Fall is here and between the start of the school year, cooler temperatures and pumpkin-spiced everything, we are looking forward to this season of change. In this quarter's newsletter we highlight the most recent anthrax outbreak information, provide a disease spotlight on murine typhus, CE announcements and more. Wishing you all safe and cozy autumnal activities!

### Zoonosis News

#### ACO Training Waivers Expire

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, the waiver enacted by the Office of the Governor suspending education and training officially expired. The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) may now resume offering two basic animal control courses and 12 hours of continuing education (CE) per calendar year, as per Health and Safety Code Chapter 829.

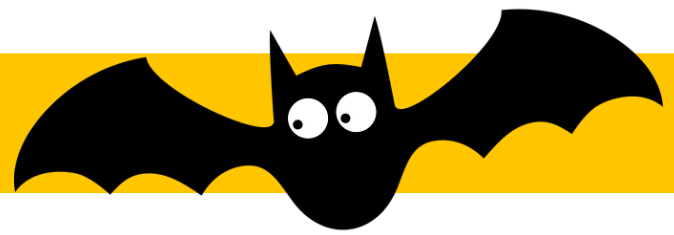
The Region 8 Zoonosis Team held its first ACO Basic Course of the year on September 22-24<sup>th</sup> in San Antonio, TX. With the support of San Antonio Animal Care Services, we were able to host a course at the Ron Darner Parks and Recreation Facility. Thank you to all who attended and helped make this course possible. We look forward to hosting another course next Spring.

#### Dr. Trevor Maness Achieves PhD Degree

We would like to extend a very special congratulations to Dr. Trevor Maness, DSHS Region 8 Zoonosis Control Program Specialist, who successfully achieved his PhD Degree this summer. Outstanding achievement, Dr. Maness!



*Dr. Trevor Maness presents at the ACO Basic Course*



## Rabies Update

By: Trevor Maness

**Quarterly Rabies Update: January – September 2021**

Between January and October of 2021, bats made up 55% of all positive rabies reports, followed by skunks (19%), raccoons (15%), foxes (4%), cats (4%), and dogs (2%).

### 2021 Rabies Cases in Animals, Region 8 January 1, 2021 – October 15, 2021

	Bat	Dog	Cat	Skunk	Raccoon	Fox	Total
Bexar	16				1		17
Comal	1		1	1	1	2	6
Dewitt				1			1
Gillespie	1				1		2
Gonzales	2			3			5
Guadalupe	2						2
Kerr	1		1	1	3		6
Lavaca	1			3			4
Medina	1	1					2
Real					1		1
Victoria	1						1
TOTALS	26	1	2	9	7	2	47

## Bats in Schools



By: Amanda Kieffer

**Every year, we receive reports of bats found in schools and other public spaces. Contact with a bat is considered high risk for rabies exposure, even if the person does not recall a bite or scratch. The following scenarios would warrant consultation with DSHS and/or medical attention:**

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

**Here are some tips on preventing bats in schools and buildings:**

- Keep doors closed during the early evening and early morning, as bats may fly into the building towards lights to catch insects.
- Maintain window screens in good repair.
- Ensure all attic and soffit vents are screened.
- Make sure any holes (dime size or larger) are sealed.

**Resources, including sample school notification letters:**

<https://schoolipm.tamu.edu/files/2017/02/BatControl.pdf>

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

<https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/education/index.html>

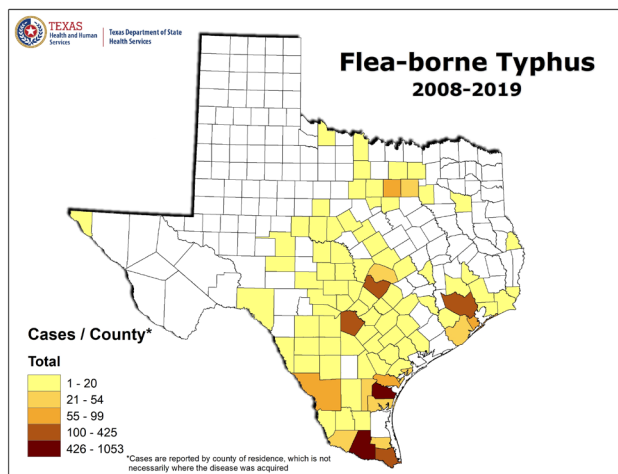
### **IF A BAT OR WILD ANIMAL IS FOUND ON SCHOOL PROPERTY:**

- Remove all students and staff from the area
- Close off area if possible
- Never touch or attempt to capture the animal with your bare hands
- Contact Animal Control to retrieve the animal. Submit for rabies testing if warranted.
- Identify all students and staff who may have had contact
- Manage exposures by washing affected area immediately and consulting with a healthcare provider
- Notify DSHS for assistance

## Disease Spotlight: Flea-Borne Typhus

By: Jon Stewart

<b>Pathogen</b>	<i>Rickettsia typhi</i> , or possibly <i>R. felis</i>
<b>Vector</b>	Fleas – Most common - <i>Xenopsylla cheopis</i> (rat flea) & <i>Ctenocephalides felis</i> (cat flea)
<b>Reservoir</b>	Rats, opossums, cats, dogs
<b>Risk Factors</b>	Risk factors include contact with fleas or rodents, and visiting or living in areas where rats, cats, and other animals have high populations.
<b>Clinical Course</b>	<p>The incubation period for flea-borne typhus is 6-14 days after contact with infected fleas or flea dirt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Fever and chills</li> <li>· Body aches and muscle pain</li> <li>· Loss of appetite</li> <li>· Nausea</li> <li>· Vomiting</li> <li>· Stomach pain</li> <li>· Cough</li> <li>· Rash (typically occurs around day 5 of illness)</li> </ul>
<b>Diagnosis</b>	The symptoms of flea-borne typhus are similar to symptoms of many other diseases. See your healthcare provider if you develop the symptoms listed above, and be sure to mention contact with fleas, stray animals (such as cats), or wildlife (such as rats or opossums).
<b>Distribution</b>	Most cases in the United States are reported in California, Texas, and Hawaii
<b>Incidence</b>	In Texas, between 2008-2018 there were 3507 cases reported in Texas.
<b>Fun Fact</b>	Flea-borne (murine) typhus was a nationally notifiable disease from 1930 until 1987.



For More Information: [https://dshs.texas.gov/IDCU/disease/murine\\_typhus/Flea-borne-Typhus.aspx](https://dshs.texas.gov/IDCU/disease/murine_typhus/Flea-borne-Typhus.aspx)

## Anthrax Outbreak 2021

By: Amanda Kieffer

The first animal anthrax case of the year was confirmed in July in a Val Verde County white-tailed deer. Additional cases have been reported throughout the year:

Reported Anthrax Cases, 2021	
County	Cases
<i>Armstrong</i>	2
<i>Hardeman</i>	3
<i>Kinney</i>	2
<i>Maverick</i>	1
<i>Real</i>	1
<i>Val Verde</i>	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>

### What is Anthrax?

Anthrax is an infectious disease caused by the bacteria, *Bacillus anthracis*. The bacteria forms spores that can survive on the ground and in pastures. Anthrax cases are commonly seen after periods of wet, cool weather followed by hot, dry conditions. These conditions cause spores in the soil to surface, where animals then consume or inhale the spores. Cases are most often reported in Southwest to West Central Texas, where naturally occurring anthrax is most prevalent.

### Anthrax in Animals

Anthrax most often occurs in grazing animals. Signs of anthrax in animals include:

- Fever
- Staggering
- Difficulty breathing
- Convulsions
- Death

Deceased animals may be found with dark blood oozing from the mouth, nose, and/or anus. Affected carcasses should be incinerated to prevent contamination. A vaccination is available for livestock.

### Anthrax in People

Veterinarians, ranchers, and people that hunt or work with grazing animals are at the highest risk of anthrax exposure. Symptoms depend on the route of exposure, and can include skin, respiratory, or intestinal syndromes. Severe shock and death can occur without treatment. Recommendations to prevent infection include:

- Avoid contact with dead animals
- Wear proper protective equipment if animal handling is necessary
- Do not open carcasses of animals with suspected anthrax
- Only harvest meat from known, healthy animals
- Thoroughly cook meat before eating.

Post-exposure prophylaxis with antibiotics is available. People with potential exposures or symptoms should consult a health care provider as soon as possible following an exposure.

### Reporting Anthrax

Suspected or confirmed anthrax in humans or animals is an immediately reportable condition. To report:

#### Human Cases:

DSHS Region 8 24/7 Line: 210-949-2121

#### Animal Cases:

TAHC 24/7 Line: 1-800-550-8242

For More Information:

[TAHC Anthrax Factsheet](#)  
[DSHS Anthrax Homepage](#)

## Announcements

### Virtual CE Courses

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

### **Local Rabies Control Authority (LRCA) Seminar**

**January 26, 2021**

**1:00pm – 5:00pm**

4-hour virtual CE course on rabies, laws, and LRCA responsibilities.

To Register, visit the following link:

[PHR8 Zoonosis LRCA Webinar](#)

### **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](#)

### **Public Health Region 8 | Zoonosis Control**

Texas Department of State Health Services

[dshs.texas.gov/region8/zoonosis](https://dshs.texas.gov/region8/zoonosis) | [Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov](mailto: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

## 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/>

### 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