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Region 8 Zoonosis Control Newsletter

Public Health Region 8 | Zoonosis Control
Texas Department of State Health Services
Region 8 - Zoonosis Control | Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Don't Fall Behind on Zoonosis Prevention!	1
Zoonosis News	1
2025 Rabies Update & Map	2
Human Notifiable Zoonoses	3
New World Screwworm	4
Mosquito Surveillance	5
Rabies Testing Information	6
Announcements & News Alerts	7

Don't Fall Behind on Zoonosis Prevention!

Welcome back to the quarterly Region 8 Zoonosis Control Newsletter! As fall settles in, we expect to see shifting patterns in wildlife behavior and vector activity. This edition includes an update on rabies trends and important reminders for rabies case submissions and testing procedures. We also provide updates on New World Screwworm (NWS) and review mosquito abatement strategies. Remember to keep an eye on changing temperatures and ensure any animals in your care remain safe and comfortable. Together, we can continue working to promote a healthy season for both humans and animals!

Dr. Kieffer presenting on NWS at Tri-National Meeting in Eagle Pass

Zoonosis News

New World Screwworm

On September 20, 2025, Mexico's National Service for Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality (SENASICA) confirmed a new case of New World Screwworm (NWS) in Nuevo Leon, less than 70 miles from the US-Mexico border. This is the closest detection of NWS to the United States to date. Federal, state and local public health agencies continue to monitor NWS activity in Mexico and South America and are taking action to prevent its spread. Check out the NWS article on Page 4 for more information on this important disease.

2025 Rabies Update & Map

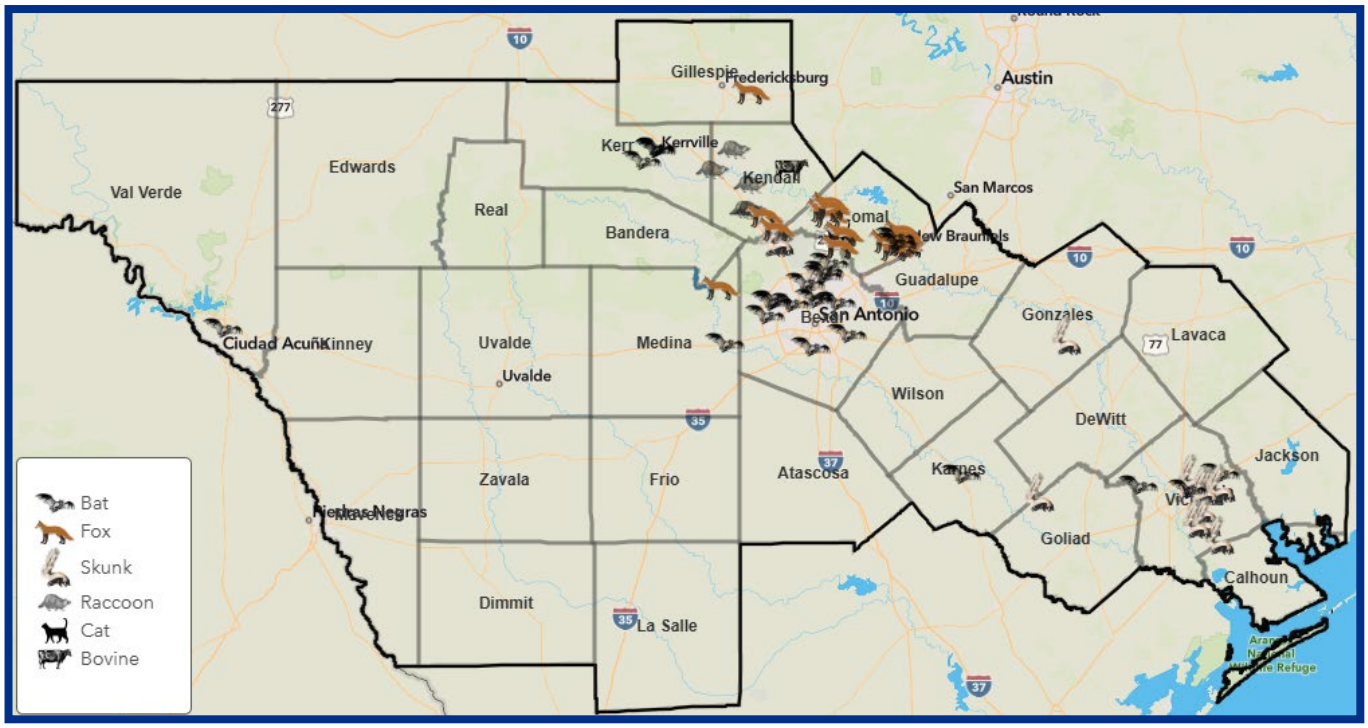
Rabies Update: January – October 2025

Between January 1 and October 27, 2025, bats made up 36.23% of all positive cases reported, with a total of twenty-five bats. This was followed by twenty foxes (28.98%), thirteen skunks (18.84%), seven raccoons (10.15%), three cats (4.35%) and one bovine (1.45%).

2025 Positive Animal Rabies Cases, Region 8

January 1, 2025 – October 27, 2025

County	Bat	Cat	Dog	Fox	Raccoon	Skunk	Bovine	All
Bexar	13			2	1	2		18
Comal	2	3		14	1	1		21
DeWitt						1		1
Gillespie				1				1
Gonzales						1		1
Karnes	1							1
Kendall				2	5		1	8
Kerr	4							4
Medina	1			1				2
Val Verde	1							1
Victoria	3					8		11
Total	25	3	0	20	7	13	1	69



Human Notifiable Zoonoses

2025 Reportable Zoonotic Disease Cases in Humans, Region 8*

January 1, 2025 – October 27, 2025

Condition	Confirmed	Probable	Suspect	All
Babesiosis	1			1
Brucellosis	1			1
Chagas	3			3
Dengue*+		1		1
Malaria+	2			2
Q Fever, Chronic	3			3
Spotted Fever Rickettsiosis	1			1
Typhus, flea-borne *(endemic, murine)*	6	34	2	42
Total	17	35	2	54

* *DSHS case counts may differ from those reported by local jurisdictions as DSHS does not report cases until epidemiological investigations are complete. Totals listed do not include those investigated by other Local Health Departments (SAMHD).*

\+ *Case counts from these conditions include travel-related infections acquired outside of Texas or outside of the United States by residents of PHR 8.*

New World Screwworm

By: Amanda Kieffer

NWS Larvae
Image Source: USDA

What is New World Screwworm?

New World Screwworm (NWS) is a parasitic fly (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) that lays its eggs in the open wounds of warm-blooded animals. Once the eggs hatch, the larvae (maggots) feed on the living tissue of the host. Unlike most other maggots that feed on dead tissue, screwworms feed on living tissue. This makes them especially harmful to affected animals. Left untreated, the infestation spreads rapidly and can lead to death.

Why is New World Screwworm Important?

Screwworm infestations can occur in livestock, pets, wildlife and even humans. NWS was previously eradicated from the United States in the 1960s through a successful sterile fly release program. However, outbreaks such as the 2016-2017 detection of NWS in Florida Key deer and recent detections of NWS in Mexico have raised increasing concerns that NWS may re-emerge in the United States. An outbreak could cause devastating animal suffering, threaten our livestock industry and create extreme economic losses. To prevent the possible spread of NWS in the United States, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has recently committed funding for sterile fly production and releasing facilities in Texas as well as enhancing surveillance along the Texas-Mexico border through the USDA Tick Rider and Beagle Brigade programs.

How is New World Screwworm Identified?

People who live and work with animals play a critical role in early detection of NWS. Prompt recognition and reporting of suspicious cases can prevent NWS from re-establishing in Texas.

Clinical Signs in Animals
• Non-healing wounds with foul odor
• Visible maggots deep within wounds
• Severe pain, lethargy & behavior change
• Weight loss, decreased appetite, production loss

Dog with NWS maggot-infested wound
Image Source: USDA

What Should I Do If I Suspect NWS?

Any suspicious wound infestation in livestock, pets or wildlife should be reported immediately. Early detection can make a difference between a controlled case and a statewide outbreak. Larvae can be identified for testing through USDA (for animal cases) and CDC (for human cases).

- **ALL** larvae (maggots) found on a suspect case should be killed in ethyl or isopropyl alcohol.
- Do **NOT** discard maggots on ground or in trash (they can continue to survive and spread)
- For pet or livestock reporting, contact the Texas Animal Health Commission and/or your veterinarian.
- For wild animal reporting, contact Texas Parks and Wildlife.
- For questions on parasite identification or human testing, email newworldscrewworm@dshs.texas.gov

For More Information on the New World Screwworm:

DSHS Guidance USDA Guidance CDC Guidance Texas Animal Health Commission Guidance

Mosquito Surveillance

By: Jon Stewart

Strengthening Mosquito Surveillance in PHR8

As mosquito-borne diseases like West Nile virus and malaria reemerge in parts of the U.S., the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) stresses the critical role of mosquito surveillance, especially following floods and severe weather events.

Why Surveillance Matters?

Mosquito surveillance helps identify species, detect arboviruses and guide timely, targeted control efforts.

Post-Flood Surveillance and Response

Flooding creates ideal breeding conditions for nuisance mosquitoes, which can hinder disaster recovery efforts. DSHS provides technical guidance for local jurisdictions to request state assistance when local abatement efforts are overwhelmed. Surveillance post-storm focuses first on nuisance species and later shifts to arbovirus-risk mosquitoes as standing water stagnates over time.

DSHS can provide technical guidance to help local jurisdictions manage spikes in mosquito populations that can hinder disaster recovery. **The Technical Guidance for Mosquito Abatement Post-Weather Incident** allows local agencies to request state assistance once local resources are exhausted.

To qualify, jurisdictions must show nuisance mosquitoes are interfering with recovery operations, document their efforts and submit a State of Texas Assistance Request (STAR). DSHS then coordinates resources through the Vector Control Task Force, which may include aerial spraying, equipment deployment or contracted support.

Mosquito Traps

Different traps are used to target various mosquito species and life stages:

- **Autocidal Gravid Ovitrap (AGO)**: Attracts and captures *Aedes* and *Culex* mosquitoes ready to lay eggs.
- **BG-Sentinel Trap**: Captures host-seeking *Aedes* and *Culex* using lures and carbon dioxide.
- **CDC Light Trap**: Draws a wide range of adult mosquitoes; ideal for arbovirus testing.
- **Gravid Trap**: Targets egg-laden *Culex* females, often vectors of West Nile virus.

Proper trap placement and attractants are essential for accurate data collection. This surveillance informs DSHS and local health departments about when and where to implement control measures like using larvicide or aerial spraying. If you or your jurisdiction are interested in mosquito trapping, please contact us at Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov.

Rabies Testing Information

By: Rachel Panneton

The DSHS Rabies Laboratory in Austin is the primary rabies diagnostic laboratory in Texas. Rabies testing is done there Monday through Friday. The lab is closed on holidays. Emergency testing is available when needed (see below). To submit a specimen for rabies testing please use the following reminders for each step and see Submitting Rabies Specimens to DSHS Laboratory for more specific details and instructions.

1. Collect & Label Specimen

- The lab accepts **only** animal heads, **except** for very small mammals such as bats, rats, and mice.
- **LIVE ANIMALS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED! PLEASE**, do **NOT** submit LIVE bats or other LIVE animals!

2. Obtain & Complete a G-9 Rabies Submission Form

- This is **required** for **every rabies specimen**.
  - *The G-9 Form is available for download on the Lab's Forms webpage. You may request a G-9 form by calling 1-888-963-7111 or emailing labinfo@dshs.texas.gov.*
  - *NOTE: Specimens submitted for rabies testing may also be tested for other pathogens of public health concern as part of state/federal surveillance programs, such as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).*

3. Notify the Laboratory of Rabies Specimen Submission (Required by Law)

- Complete and submit the online Rabies Submission Electronic Notification Form, here. -OR-
- Call the Rabies Hotline at 1-800-252-8163 (Toll Free) 24 hours a day. *This number is for Specimen Shipment Notification Only!*

4. Ship/Deliver Rabies Specimens to DSHS

- A tutorial on packing and submitting rabies specimens is available for download at Microbiology Specimen Submission Job Aids | Texas DSHS.

Emergency Rabies Testing

If there is a need for emergency rabies testing it is available on weekdays, Saturdays and holidays (except Thanksgiving and Christmas day). The DSHS Rabies lab **must be notified** the business day **before** the day of emergency testing by 4:00 PM.

To arrange for Emergency Saturday Testing:

- **Before 4:00 PM Fridays**, call the Rabies Laboratory at (512) 776-7595
- **After 4:00 PM Fridays**, call (512) 776-7111 and request to speak with a Zoonosis Control staff member

For More Rabies Testing Information:

DSHS Rabies Testing
Submitting Rabies Specimens to DSHS Laboratory
Requesting DSHS Rabies Emergency Testing

Announcements & News Alerts

Animal Control Office (ACO) Basic Course

Spring of 2026 | TBD

We will have our ACO Basic in April 2026. We do not have a location yet! If you are interested in hosting the ACO Basic please reach out to us at: Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov.

Texas Spay and Neuter Program (TXSNP)

The Texas Spay and Neuter Program (TXSNP) splash page is now live at https://www.dshs.texas.gov/spay-neuter.

Submit TXSNP questions to TXSpayNeuter@dshs.texas.gov

Diseases in Nature Conference (DIN)

July 8 – 10, 2026 | College Station, TX

DIN is a conference highlighting epidemiological investigations, clinical case studies, basic and applied research, and other topics in emerging and current zoonotic and environmentally acquired infectious diseases. The conference's goal is to increase knowledge and awareness of these diseases within the veterinary, medical, public health, and academic research communities.

Location: Texas A&M Hotel and Conference Center
(177 Joe Routt Boulevard, College Station, TX 77840)

For more information: *https://www.diseasesinnature.com*

Future Continuing Education (CE) Course Topics

If you have any suggestions or requests for future CE topics, please let us know by emailing us at: Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov

For More ACO CE Course Information:
https://www.dshs.texas.gov/notifiable-conditions/zoonosis-control/education/animal-control-officers/dshs-aco-training-course

ACO Manual Online

The ACO Training Manual is available for **free** on the *DSHS website*.

***Note**: Updates to the manual are posted and represented by dates in parenthesis beside each chapter.*

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