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State Veterinarian Urges Pet and Livestock Owners to Vaccinate Against Rabies

Rabid horse identified in Lapeer County is state's third rabies case this year

LANSING, Mich. - The Michigan Department of Agriculture's (MDA) State Veterinarian Dr. Steven Halstead today urged Michigan citizens to be pro-active and have their pets and livestock vaccinated against rabies and other diseases after confirmation that a horse in Lapeer County tested positive for rabies.

"It is essential pet and livestock owners take steps to vaccinate against rabies and other diseases because of the possibility human exposure to the disease from interaction with infected horses, cattle, dogs, and cats," Dr. Halstead said. "By working with their veterinarian, owners can take significant steps toward providing a safe and healthy environment for their families and animals."

A quarantine was issued on the Lapeer County horse farm and will be monitored by county animal control officers. Feral cats and any pet cat on the premises showing clinical signs consistent with rabies or with a history of biting someone within the previous 10 days will be tested. Six people, including the owner, trainer, and veterinarian, that may have been exposed to the rabid horse are receiving a series of preventative rabies shots. No other humans or animals are known to have been exposed at this time.

This is the third case of rabies in Michigan thus far in 2010 - a skunk was found to be rabid in St. Clair County and a bat was found to be rabid in Kent County.

A standard vaccination program for pets and livestock includes vaccinations required by law, along with vaccinations for diseases commonly found throughout the state. Licensed vaccines are also available for horses, cows, sheep and goats.

"It is important to make sure animals attending fairs or exhibitions, field trials or shows receive additional vaccinations to protect against diseases they may be exposed to in group housing or stressful situations. Owners should consult their private veterinarian to develop an appropriate vaccination program specific for their animals," Halstead said.

State law requires ferrets and dogs be vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian. It is also important to make sure that cats kept indoors also be vaccinated as bats frequently get into homes exposing the cats.

Dr. Halstead also recommends the following vaccinations:

- All horses against rabies, Eastern/Western Equine Encephalitis, Tetanus, and West Nile Virus.
- Having dogs checked for heartworm and intestinal parasites, along with vaccinations against canine distemper, parvovirus, and adenovirus.
- Having cats checked for heartworm and internal parasites and vaccinations for cats include rabies, herpes virus, calicivirus, and panleukopenia.

For more information on pet and livestock vaccination requirements, please visit www.michigan.gov/mda. For the latest information on rabies visit www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

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