

Health Alert Network

Update

3/30/2026

Expanded rabies surveillance among wild, captive, and domestic mammals in Nebraska

On March 20, 2026, a striped skunk collected in Jefferson County tested positive for rabies, representing the easternmost detection of skunk rabies in Nebraska in more than a decade. While Nebraska routinely has detections in the western region and a limited number of detections in the central region, including a horse with skunk variant rabies (Holt County 2022) and two rabid skunks (Webster County 2017, Hall County 2015), the last detection in eastern Nebraska was a skunk collected in Johnson County in January 2015. To better understand the range of skunk variant rabies across the state, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) is calling upon veterinary practitioners for help with expanded rabies surveillance through September 2026. Any wild or captive mammal (excluding bats) or owned or stray domestic mammals (e.g., dogs, cats) exhibiting neurologic signs can be submitted to the Nebraska Veterinary Diagnostic Center (NVDC) for no-cost rabies testing separate from normal rabies testing processes.

Potential ANIMAL to HUMAN rabies exposures:

For wild, captive, and domestic mammals involved with potential human exposures, **there are no changes to existing processes. Any mammals that are involved with human exposures should be submitted for rabies testing with an “RA” (Rabies Approval) number as normal** using the NDHHS [Rabies Test Requisition webpage](#). Please call NDHHS at 402-471-2937 to obtain the PIN number for submissions.

Mammals exhibiting neurologic signs of illness with no potential human exposure:

To submit eligible mammals for testing, **call NDHHS at 402-471-2937** to obtain an “AN” number **BEFORE** sending the specimen to NVDC. Submission forms with instructions for sample preparation and shipping will be provided. If an animal is collected outside of normal business hours, refrigerate the carcass or decapitated head until contact can be made.

Print the shipping labels at your site using [UPS EZ-Ship](#). For specimens submitted with a prior-approved “AN” number via UPS EZ-Ship, the submitter will not be charged for shipping. Specimen handling fees will not be covered by NDHHS funding nor any other means. To maximize our expanded surveillance efforts, please consider reducing the overall costs of shipping (if immediate rabies testing is not necessary) by freezing samples (e.g., decapitated heads) and shipping multiple samples to NVDC. If the submitter opts for delayed shipping, please wait to call for the “AN” number until immediately prior to when all samples will be shipped; each specimen must be accompanied by a separate “AN” number. In cases where immediate testing is necessary, please call for the “AN” requisition during normal business hours and proceed with individual sample shipping.

Any wild or captive mammals (excluding bats) or owned or stray domestic mammals **observed exhibiting neurologic signs of illness prior to death** are eligible for testing; the brain must be undamaged. Such animals must be euthanized or have died after signs of illness were witnessed. Please **do not submit specimens from animals only found dead with unknown symptoms!** Thank you for your participation in expanded rabies surveillance in Nebraska and for your continued support with rabies prevention and control.

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