

Fox with Rabies Identified in Champaign County - September 2005

Dr. Connie Austin, Illinois Department of Public Health

On September 15, 2005, the Illinois Department of Public Health laboratory in Springfield reported that a fox from Champaign County tested positive for rabies. The fox was collected by Champaign County Animal Control.

This fox is the first terrestrial mammal (non-bat) testing positive for rabies in Champaign County since 1984 when a skunk tested positive. The last time a fox tested positive for rabies in the state was in 1989 in a fox from Kankakee County. Further testing to identify the rabies variant that affected the fox will be performed by the IDPH laboratory early next week. In addition, specimens from the fox brain will be sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for confirmation and further rabies variant typing.

Veterinarians in this area of the state in particular should consider the diagnosis of rabies in animals with consistent symptoms and arrange for testing as needed. They should also encourage rabies vaccination of dogs, cats and ferrets and consider vaccination of valuable livestock and horses. If veterinarians in this area hear reports of wild animals, such as foxes or skunks, acting abnormally they should report this to their local animal control agencies. This is also a good opportunity for veterinarians to review the rabies pre-exposure vaccination status of the staff in their clinic. Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for those with appropriate pre-exposure rabies vaccination is far simpler than rabies PEP for those who have not previously received rabies vaccination.

When submitting brains for rabies testing please be sure to refrigerate, NOT freeze the brain and provide the entire brain for testing. To call a brain negative for rabies, three different parts of the brain must be tested negative. Within Illinois, five laboratories perform the rabies test on animal brains. These include three public health laboratories (Chicago, Springfield and Carbondale) and two agriculture laboratories (Galesburg and Centralia).

In Illinois from January 1 through September 15, 2005, 40 animals have tested positive for rabies. The animals testing positive include 32 bats, 6 skunks, one cow and one red fox. The 6 rabid skunks and cow are from a three county area in north central Illinois (LaSalle, DeKalb and Lee County).

Dinner at Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum is Sold Out

Early registrations for the ISVMA 2005 Annual Convention in Springfield, IL have been very brisk. The 250 seats for the President's Dinner at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum (ALPLM) have all been sold. You may still visit the ALPLM during the convention...but the unique opportunity to participate in the private dinner and museum opening was so incredibly popular that it was sold out in less than two weeks.

ISVMA will maintain a "WAITING LIST" for those that wish to place their names on a list for seats that become available. Please let us know if you wish to be added to this list.

The Convention prospectus and registration forms were mailed two weeks ago. If you can't find your registration form or prefer to register online, you can obtain all the information you need (and register with your credit card) at:

www.isvma.org/Convention/2005convention.htm

Remember, there are so many reasons to attend this year's convention. You'll be amazed at all of the new program offerings and opportunities!

We hope to set records for attendance this year and hope that you'll encourage your associates and staff to attend!

Sponsor-A-Student at the ISVMA Convention

The goal of this program is to defray cost of student participation and initiate mentor/mentee relationships. Many first-through-third year students have indicated an interest in driving 90 miles to Springfield for the Convention. However, the pricing structure for Convention is built upon an assumption that only fourth year students will receive complimentary registration.

In order to allow additional students to attend the Convention, ISVMA is soliciting \$100 sponsorships from ISVMA members to underwrite the cost of providing complimentary registrations for all interested University of Illinois DVM students.

Additionally, we will provide on-site support and long-term resources for mentor/mentee relationships. We will recognize DVMs who have sponsored a student—and students who are sponsored—by adding a special sticker or ribbon to their convention badge.

You can participate in this important opportunity for students by indicating your interest on your [convention registration form](#).

Mardi Growl - A Benefit to Aid the Pets Devastated by Hurricane Katrina

The Chicago Veterinary Medical Association, Steve Dale, host of Pet Central and in cooperation with the House of Blues Hotel, will host a benefit to support the efforts of the animals affected by Hurricane Katrina.

On Wednesday, September 21st, the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association will sponsor "Mardi Growl" at the House of Blues Hotel. For \$25, people can enjoy appetizers and live entertainment from Even Flow, Chicago's own Pearl Jam Tribute Band. Pets are also welcome for a donation of \$5 with a special treat to all four legged friends in attendance. The primary goal of the evening is to raise money to benefit two organizations committed to the recovery efforts and placement of pets affected by Hurricane Katrina – American Veterinary Medical Foundation and the Louisiana SPCA. All proceeds from this evening will be distributed to these worthy organizations, which have been the backbone of the animals hurt or endangered by this catastrophic event.

For more information, please visit chicagovma.org.

Interim Guidelines for Animal Health and Control of Disease Transmission in Pet Shelters

The following is a document titled "Interim Guidelines for Animal Health and Disease Transmission in Pet Shelters," which was produced in cooperation with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to assist individuals working with animals affected and displaced by hurricane Katrina. Both CDC and AVMA received numerous requests for guidance. Additional documents will likely be forthcoming, including basic information about potential zoonoses and a Q and A about keeping pets in human shelters. This is provided FYI.

These are labeled "interim" and "guidance" because the related situation is obviously changing daily, if not hourly, and how animals are managed is, in large part, affected by professional judgment. That means that not everyone will agree with every recommendation and that not every recommendation will apply in every situation. If you or your members have comments regarding the document, please let me know and I will be happy to share those comments here and with CDC. Depending on the nature of comments received, there may be future updates of the document. The current document and any updated versions will be posted on

the AVMA Web site with other hurricane relief resources at www.avma.org.

These Interim Guidelines have been developed by consultation between the American Veterinary Medical Association and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and are advisory in nature. They are intended to provide guidance for the care of animals entering shelters and for persons working with or handling the animals in response to Hurricane Katrina. The guidance reflects information available as of September 2005 and may be updated as more information becomes available.

* * * * *

Animals arriving at shelters as a result of Hurricane Katrina need special care. Because they have been exposed to contaminated flood waters and have not had access to safe food and fresh water, many are stressed and dehydrated and some may be injured and/or ill. Stressed animals may or may not show signs of illness and may also exhibit behavioral disorders. Following some simple animal management and disease control guidelines can help improve animal health and reduce the risk of disease transmission and injury between animals and people.

What follows are some recommendations for pets arriving at animal shelters.

Animal Health History, Examinations and Identification

- Each animal should be examined at a triage site. Particular attention should be paid to hydration status, cuts and abrasions, paw health (e.g., pads and claws, area between toes), ear health (e.g., redness, discharge), oral injuries (may have occurred if animal was foraging for food), vomiting and/or diarrhea, respiratory disease, and evidence of parasite infestation.
- Animals should be bathed upon entry, particularly if they may have been in contact with contaminated flood water. Dawn™ dish soap can remove petroleum and some other toxic chemicals. The bather should wear protective clothing (e.g. rain suits or ponchos), gloves, and a face shield or goggles with a surgical mask to avoid mucous membrane contact with droplets and splashes that may contain toxic materials.
- Intake personnel should ask whether the pet has been in the custody of the owner since the beginning of the evacuation, and should inquire about the animal's health and vaccination history, paying particular attention to any current medical needs or chronic health problems (e.g., diabetes, which would signal a need for insulin injections). In addition, owners should be questioned about the animal's usual temperament (e.g., whether the animal can safely be housed with others of the same species, might it be aggressive toward caretakers).
- A health record for each individual animal should be created and updated as needed. Identification information for the animal should correspond to that for the owner, so that animals and their owners can be reunited. Owned animals should be clearly marked as "owned" and not "abandoned" to reduce the risk of mix-ups. Photographs should be taken, if possible. A collar (leather or nylon, not a choke chain) containing readily legible identification information should be placed on all animals. Ideally, all animals should be microchipped.
- Cages should be clearly labeled so that newly arriving personnel are easily apprised of the health status and temperament of sheltered animals.
- Animals arriving without owners should be scanned for microchip identification. Microchips are most often placed between the shoulder blades, but earlier models were prone to migration, so animals should be scanned from the shoulder blade down to the ventral chest. All scanners are not capable of reading all microchips, so if multiple types of scanners are available, scan with each type before declaring an animal to be microchip-free. Animals without microchips should be checked for other forms of identification such as an identification tag or a tattoo (for dogs this may be the AKC registration number) and this information should be used to trace the animal, if possible.

Animal Health Management and Prevention and Treatment of Zoonotic and Nosocomial Diseases

Intestinal Parasitism

- Dogs should be treated prophylactically for internal parasites including *Giardia*, roundworms, hookworms, and whipworms.
- Exposure to mosquitoes in flood-ravaged areas presents an increased risk of heartworm disease. If possible, dogs should be tested for heartworms and appropriate preventatives or treatment administered.

External Parasitism

- Dogs and cats should be examined for flea or tick infestation, and treated appropriately.
- Preventive flea and tick treatments should be considered for all dogs and cats housed in shelters.

Vaccinations

While the American Veterinary Medical Association normally recommends that vaccination programs be customized to individual animals, in disaster situations vaccination status may be difficult, if not impossible, to determine. For this reason, administration of “core” vaccines to animals upon admission to shelters is considered appropriate. Vaccines take some time to become effective and will not address pre-existing exposures, so personnel are cautioned to be alert for clinical signs of disease.

- A rabies vaccination should be administered to dogs, cats and ferrets. This is especially important for dogs and cats housed in group settings. Personnel should be aware that rabies vaccines may take as long as 28 days to become protective.
- Additional core vaccinations for dogs include distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus and parainfluenza.
- Additional core vaccinations for cats include feline viral rhinotracheitis, panleukopenia and calicivirus. Feline leukemia vaccine should be considered for young kittens that will be housed in close proximity to other cats.
- Vaccination (intranasal) against *Bordetella bronchisepta* should be considered for all dogs and cats to reduce the incidence of kennel cough.
- Because leptospirosis risk is higher in flood-ravaged areas and because the disease is zoonotic, vaccination should be considered. Personnel are cautioned that leptospirosis vaccines are serovar-specific, and that the potential for adverse reactions may be higher than for some other vaccines.

Diarrheal Disease

- Animals presenting with (or developing) diarrhea should be separated from healthy animals (see “Facilities Management”).
- Nosocomial agents of concern that may be transmitted by feces include parvovirus, *Giardia*, and intestinal parasites.
- Zoonotic agents of concern for small animals include *Cryptosporidia*, *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella*, which are highly infectious and have been associated with outbreaks in shelters and veterinary clinics.

Behavioral Concerns

- Fear, panic, separation anxiety, noise and storm phobias, and other behavioral disorders are common problems in displaced animals. Animals that have never had these problems may develop them and pre-existing problems are likely to worsen.
- Providing housed animals with fresh food and water on a regular basis and establishing other familiar routines will assist animals in adjusting to their new environment. Food and water should be provided at multiple smaller and dispersed stations, rather than a few large clumped stations, to minimize fear, competition and fighting among unfamiliar animals.
- Animals without a prior history of aggression may snap, bite, growl or hiss as a result of fear or uncertainty. Shelter personnel should approach rescued animals calmly, but cautiously. Only experienced personnel should handle animals that exhibit significant behavioral disorders.
- Behavioral exercises and behavioral medications may be administered short- or long-term, as required, to help animals recover. Shelters are encouraged to seek assistance from qualified animal and veterinary behaviorists who can assist them in meeting these needs.

Euthanasia

- Animals that are irreversibly ill or exhibiting intractable signs of aggression should be humanely euthanized.
- Animals that have been previously associated with transmission of monkeypox (e.g., prairie dogs, African rodents) are under legal restrictions for movement, except to a veterinarian for care. If one of these high-risk species is presented for veterinary care at a shelter, they must be kept isolated from other animals and housed in individual cages. If this cannot be accomplished, these animals must be humanely euthanized.

Personal Protection for Caretakers

- Wash hands with soap and water
 - Before and after handling each animal
 - After coming into contact with animal saliva, urine, feces or blood
 - After cleaning cages
 - Before eating meals, taking breaks, smoking or leaving the shelter
 - Before and after using the restroom.
- Wear gloves when handling sick or wounded animals.
- Wear gloves when cleaning cages.
- Consider use of goggles or face protection if splashes from contaminated surfaces may occur

- Bring a change of clothes to wear home at the end of the day.
- Bag and thoroughly clean clothes worn at the shelter.
- Do not allow rescued animals to “kiss” you or lick your face.
- Do not eat in animal care areas.
- Whenever possible, caretakers should have completed a 3-dose prophylactic vaccination series for rabies.

Avoiding Bites and Scratches

- Use caution when approaching any animal that may be sick, wounded or stressed.
- If available use thick gloves, restraints or sedation to handle aggressive animals.
- If bitten or scratched, thoroughly wash wound with soap and water and seek medical care.
- Because the exposure histories of these animals are unknown, bites from dogs, cats and ferrets may be considered a risk for rabies, even if the animal appears healthy and has been vaccinated. Therefore, personnel who are bitten should be evaluated for rabies risk. Dogs, cats and ferrets that bite a person may be quarantined for 10 days and observed for signs of rabies. If an animal develops signs of rabies or dies during the 10-day period following the bite, it should be tested for rabies.

Facility Management

Separation of Animals

- Animals should not be housed or permitted in food or break areas.
- Separate newly arriving animals from animals that have been housed one week or longer.
- Animals of different species should not be housed together (ex, do not place a ferret and a rabbit in the same cage)
- Avoid caging animals from different households together. If animals of the same species come into the shelter together and the owner requests that they be caged together, this should be allowed as it may decrease an animal’s stress if it is housed with a companion. This should not be done if the owner indicates the animals do not get along with one another.
- If animals of unknown origin must be housed together, care should be taken to not mix genders for un-neutered animals.
- Routinely monitor animals for signs of illness. Separate sick animals from healthy animals, especially animals with diarrhea or signs of upper respiratory disease. If a separate room or area is not available, animals with diarrhea or signs of respiratory disease should be housed in bottom cages.
- People assigned to care for sick animals should care for those animals only, and should not move between sick and healthy animals.
- Limit contact of young children, the elderly, pregnant women and immunocompromised people with rescue animals; particularly animals that are ill.

Cleaning and Disposal

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect cages between animals.
- Remove and dispose of animal waste in a timely manner.
- Double bag and remove dead animals shortly after death. A log of animals that have died or have been humanely euthanized should be kept. This log should include animal identification and/or descriptive information for each animal.
- Identify an area separate from the shelter for carcass storage and disposal.
- Arrange for waste removal from the pet shelter.
- Pet shelters should have adequate lighting, water and wastewater disposal.

Environmental Security

- If at all possible, devise strategies to prevent wild rodents from mixing with shelter animals.
- Keep food supplies away from wild rodents.

A Note on the Human-Animal Bond and the Well-Being of Pets and Owners

Separation of pets and owners is a difficult issue. Media coverage of hurricane Katrina is replete with examples of people who refused to be evacuated from affected areas without some assurance that their pets would be saved and

cared for as well. When people have lost everything, their pets can be an important source of emotional support. This is particularly true for those without family or a strong human social network. Removal of this last remnant of normality and comfort can be psychologically traumatic.

Despite the importance of the owner-pet relationship, limited availability of suitable housing, as well as animal and public health and safety concerns, will make housing pets in shelters or foster homes not only necessary, but in the best interest of most pets and their owners. Foster homes are an alternative that can provide some semblance of routine and reduce crowding and stress in shelters that might otherwise predispose animals to injury and disease.

For additional information about rescue efforts, animal health and welfare, particular diseases or conditions, or infection control please call these organizations or visit their websites:

Louisiana SPCA – Laura Maloney 225-413-8813
East Baton Rouge Animal Control – Hilton Cole 225-774-7700
LSU School of Veterinary Medicine – Dr. Becky Adcock – 225-578-9900
Louisiana Veterinary Medical Association – 1-800-524-2996 or 225-928-5862

CDC Healthy Pets Healthy People – www.cdc.gov/healthypets
American Veterinary Medical Association – www.avma.org
Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams – www.vmat.org
Association of Shelter Veterinarians – www.sheltervet.org
American College of Veterinary Behaviorists – www.veterinarybehaviorists.org
The Center for Food Security and Public Health – www.cfsph.iastate.edu/brm



UI-CVM Students Need Help with Project

ISVMA has once again been contacted by students working on the Veterinary Career Resource Center website, <http://vcrcillinois.org> at University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine. The website is a resource for people with an interest in veterinary medicine, veterinarians looking for a position or students looking for an externship.

The students are updating the website and are working on a section called “Explore Careers”. In this section, veterinarians have been profiled in specific areas. However, they are lacking profiles in several areas. They would like to interview veterinarians employed in a number of specialized areas:

Anesthesia
Behavior
Emergency and Critical Care
Epidemiology
Microbiology
Nutrition
Pharmacology
Poultry
Preventative Medicine
Radiology
Surgery
Theriogenology
Toxicology
International Veterinary Medicine

If you are willing to assist the students in their project by agreeing to be interviewed and profiled, please contact Erin Lindblad at ehollim2@uiuc.edu.

About the Photo in This Issue...

The California Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) is a year-round resident (non-migratory). This species limited range, extending north from Mexico's Baja California to coastal southern California, and its specific habitat requirements, make it vulnerable and a high conservation priority. Burgeoning human populations have fragmented and destroyed suitable habitat for this species in southern California so that it was Federally-listed as a Threatened species in 1993.

Identification

A small, slender, gray, nonmigratory songbird having a long, black tail with white tips and fine white edging. Male in breeding plumage has a black cap, otherwise has a black line over the eye. Males mostly gray with darker upperparts. Females have more of a brown tone on back, flanks, and belly. Makes a kittenlike mewing that distinguishes it from the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila melanura*). The California can also be distinguished from the Black-tailed by its darker underparts and less white on its tail. The other gnatcatchers, Blue-gray and Black-capped, are larger with more white on their tails.

Distribution and Population Trends

The entire world's population of the California Gnatcatcher occurs in Baja California and coastal southern California year-round where it depends on a variety of arid scrub habitats. Limited to coastal sage scrub habitat in California and northern Baja but more widespread in southern Baja. Even in the early 1900's, the population was described as being scarce and irregularly distributed but by the 1940's habitat was noticeably reduced. In the U.S. loss of coastal sage scrub habitat has been estimated to be as much as 70-90%, with approximately 33% lost since 1993 when the species was Federally-listed as Threatened.

Ecology

Monogamous pairs tend to stay in the same locale. Both parents build nest, incubate, and care for young. Nest site established by male who also initiates nest building. The cone-shaped nests are built in shrubs and first-brood eggs (2-5) are laid in late March. With a roughly 120 day breeding season, they may be able to have as many as three broods per season. A high rate of nest predation is compensated by up to ten re-nesting attempts over the long breeding season. Young tend to disperse within ten km of their natal territory and find a mate within several months. Survival depends on winter temperatures and rainfall. Main food intake consists of arthropods, especially leafhoppers, spiders, beetles, and true bugs.

Threats

With the description of the California Gnatcatcher's preferred habitat type coinciding with the description for high real estate value (coastal, low-elevation, shallowly sloped or level lands), it is no wonder that habitat loss is the main threat facing the species. Coastal sage scrub habitat was developed rapidly from the 1940's to 1990's for agriculture, grazing, or urban areas, and is considered now one of the most endangered habitats in the U.S. This has created a tenuous relationship between the U.S. and Mexico; 99% of the population survives south of El Rosario, Baja California. Habitat loss is not a concern in central and southern Baja California. Parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbird in northern part of its range where the cowbirds begin laying the first week in May, some 2 months after gnatcatchers begin. Some gnatcatchers may abandon nest after cowbird egg laid. Exotic plants outcompete native coastal sage scrub plants after fires or grazing. Apparently can withstand disturbance at nest site during incubation from researchers and loud noise (construction, airport, highway). In the U.S., the Threatened status and protection afforded to the northernmost subspecies may be reevaluated by the USFWS under pressure from developers because of recent genetic findings.

Conservation

The northernmost subspecies was listed in 1993 as Threatened in California under the Endangered Species Act. This decision instigated legislation in California that protects natural communities while allowing continued economic growth. The implementation of this initiative, known as the Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) program, continues to hinge on the conservation of the California Gnatcatcher. To date, 6 NCCP plans have been approved, conserving 36,279 coastal sage scrub habitat. In 1995, a California Gnatcatcher Symposium was held at which research findings were shared, though much of the work remains unpublished and not peer-reviewed. Most habitat used by the gnatcatcher is under private ownership. In 2000, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated

13 critical habitat units, encompassing 207,890 ha, 83% of which was on private lands. Survey protocols have been standardized and long-term monitoring programs implemented to answer research needs and evaluate the effectiveness of some management efforts. Cowbirds are trapped in areas inhabited by gnatcatchers. Habitat restoration is also done as a mitigation effort by developers. It usually takes 4 years for California Gnatcatchers to return and begin nesting at a restored site. The removal of exotic plants is one method used to restore habitat.

I photographed this bird on September 9, 2005 on the San Pedro Peninsula south of Los Angeles, California.



Contact Us

Please feel free to forward this issue of the E-SOURCE to veterinarians that are not receiving ISVMA's electronic newsletter. Any ISVMA member may subscribe to the E-SOURCE for free:

If you wish to add your name to the recipient list, send an e-mail to info@isvma.org and ask to receive the E-SOURCE newsletter.

ISVMA values your membership and does not want to send you any unwanted email. If you would like to be removed from this member service, please email info@isvma.org