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Two skunks inside the city limits of Burleson have tested positive for rabies in the last two weeks.

The first positive was Jan. 29 of this year on Lynnwood Ave. In that case, two dogs killed a skunk. Those dogs are in a 45-day home isolation. On Feb. 13, a Burleson animal control officer captured a skunk that was running loose on Wilshire Boulevard/Hwy. 174. There was no known contact with another animal or person, but the skunk was sent for testing because it was captured during daylight hours. Skunks are nocturnal animals. That Wilshire Boulevard skunk tested positive for rabies.

In 2012, the Texas Department of Health reported seven skunks in Johnson County that had reported positive for rabies.

Rabies continues to be enzootic (disease that is constantly present in an animal) in skunks in Texas. The numbers and percentage of skunks that are positive for rabies varies cyclically.

You can prevent exposing your pets to the rabies virus. The most important thing that people can do is to have their animals vaccinated against rabies and keep those vaccinations up to date. State law requires that you have your dogs and cats vaccinated against rabies by a veterinarian at 4 months of age.

High-risk animals for rabies in Texas are skunks, bats, raccoons, foxes and coyotes. Rabbits, hares and small rodents such as squirrels, rats, mice, hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils and chipmunks are rarely found to be infected with rabies and have not been known to cause rabies in humans in the United States. Dogs, cats, horses and cattle are the most frequently reported rabid domestic animals in Texas.

DSHS also offers this advice:

- Keep cats and ferrets indoors and keep dogs indoors or in a fenced yard.
- Spay or neuter pets to prevent unwanted animals that may not receive proper care from visiting your animals.

- Teach children not to play with any animal that they do not know, even if the animal seems friendly.
- Avoid animals, both domestic and wild, that appear disoriented, fearless or aggressive. Nighttime animals such as bats, raccoons and skunks that are active in the daytime may be sick.
- Do not touch any wild animal that appears ill or dead. If you live inside the city limits of Burleson, call Burleson Animal Services at 817-426-9283.
- Don't attract wild animals to your yard. Avoid leaving pet food outdoors, and keep garbage in closed containers.
- Stay away from wild animals, and never keep a wild animal as a pet.
- Have domestic ferrets, wolf-dog hybrids and livestock, especially those that are in frequent contact with humans, vaccinated against rabies.

Informative web-sites on Rabies:

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/rabies/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>

<http://www.burlesontx.com/DocumentCenter/View/1597>