



Media Release

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Benton County Rabies Clinic Announced *Low Cost Rabies Vaccinations to be offered April 30 – May 7*

(Benton County) The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) is partnering with local veterinarians for the Benton County Rabies Clinic Week 2016. On April 30th through May 7th, participating veterinarian offices will be offering the rabies vaccination for dogs and cats at reduced rates. Some veterinarians will be conducting “walk-up” clinics throughout Benton County. Other veterinarians will offer rabies vaccinations at reduced rates in their offices. It is Arkansas state law to have dogs and cats vaccinated against rabies by a *licensed veterinarian*.

Vaccinating dogs and cats against rabies not only protects pets, it also provides a barrier of protection between humans and wildlife. “We do a much better job of protecting indoor pets than we do the yard dogs and barn cats,” Susan Weinstein DVM, state public health veterinarian at ADH said. “But those outside pets are the ones at more risk of encountering a rabid animal.”

All dogs and cats four months of age or older are required to have a rabies vaccination given by a licensed veterinarian. Regardless of the age of the animal at initial vaccination, a booster vaccination should be administered one year later to ensure immunity to the rabies virus. One shot is not enough. In other words, dogs and cats, regardless of age, must receive two rabies vaccinations approximately one year apart. After these initial “booster vaccinations”, then the pet may continue receiving the rabies vaccination at one to three year intervals depending on the type of vaccine used. Both one- and three-year duration vaccines are available.

After the initial two vaccinations, if a veterinarian administers a one-year licensed rabies vaccine, the pet will need to be revaccinated one year later. If a three-year vaccine is chosen, then the pet will be required to be revaccinated three years later. Pet owners should ask their veterinarian if a one-year or three-year vaccine was used to vaccinate their animals.

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Rabies is a fatal viral disease that affects the brain and nerves. Arkansans and their pets can get rabies from the bite or scratch of a rabid animal. They can also be infected by getting a rabid animal's saliva in the eyes, nose, mouth, or an open wound. All warm-blooded animals can get rabies. However, some animals are more likely to become infected than others.

Animals that are a high risk for spreading rabies include bats, skunks, foxes, coyotes, and raccoons.

In 2015, the state had 73 animals (53 skunks, 1 fox, 16 bats, 2 cows, and 1 dog) test positive for rabies. One cow and one skunk tested positive for rabies last year in Benton County.

"We know having rabid animals in an area increases the rabies threat to pets and livestock," Dr. Weinstein said. "Rabid animals are a critical reminder to everyone to make sure their pets and livestock are current on their vaccinations."

For more information on Rabies, visit the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention website: www.cdc.gov as well as the Arkansas Department of Health: www.healthy.arkansas.gov.

Contact the Benton County Health Unit at (479) 986-1358 for a full list of clinics and participating veterinarians. The list can be emailed by contacting Kyle Krievans at kyle.krievans@arkansas.gov or Sarah Schopper at sarah.schopper@arkansas.gov. The list is also available on the Benton County Website: www.co.benton.ar.us. If you live outside of Benton County, contact your local health department for information about the Rabies Clinic Week in your area.

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