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**Arizona Charts Record Number of Rabid Animals in 2009**

Arizona marked a historic milestone with the number of rabid animals in 2009. One case in particular, of a rabid bobcat walking into a bar, sounded more like the beginning of a joke, but highlighted the importance of rabies awareness.

So far 261 animals tested positive for rabies, 85 more than 2008. During the record breaking year, two counties established quarantines, another first for the state.

“There is no sign of rabies letting up in many parts of the state,” said Craig Levy, Vector-Borne Disease Program Manager. “As we head into 2010, we need to be prepared for more rabid animals and the exposures to people and pets that they bring.”

ADHS works closely with Arizona Department of Game and Fish to educate the public about wild animals and rabies, as well as county health departments and local animal control programs.

With the long holiday weekend, more people may be spending time outside or hunting. It is important to remember two key points:

- Avoid wild animals, especially ones that appear to be sick, dead or behaving in a strange manner. It’s particularly important to teach this to children, because of their curiosity of wild animals.
- Vaccinate your pets – pets more commonly come into contact with wild animals than people. If your pet is current on rabies vaccinations, it is extremely unlikely to catch rabies from another animal and bring it home.

In December, Santa Cruz County instituted a 60-day quarantine for the entire county, similar to Coconino County’s quarantine earlier in the year. Both counties ordered people to keep their dogs in their yards or on a short leash, bring dishes of pet food indoors at night and vaccinate all pets.

Rabies is transmitted through bites or saliva contact with a rabid animal. It is almost always fatal once symptoms appear; for this reason people must be treated promptly to prevent infection. In 2009, 47 people in Arizona were exposed to confirmed rabid animals. They received the correct treatment quickly and the infection was stopped.

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