NEWS RELEASE
Arizona Department of Health Services

HEALTH AND WELLNESS FOR ALL ARIZONANS

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SOUTHERN ARIZONA RABIES ADVISORY

The Arizona Departments of Health Services, Agriculture, and Game and Fish want to alert Arizonans to an increase in rabid skunks in two southern counties. Since the beginning of 2014, 13 rabid skunks have been identified in Pima and Santa Cruz Counties. In 2013, a total of 17 rabid skunks were identified in these areas.

Rabies is found mainly in wild animals such as bats, skunks, foxes, bobcats and coyotes. Rodents such as rats, mice, and squirrels aren't likely to be infected with rabies. The first sign of rabies is usually a change in the animal's normal behavior. The greatest danger to people is through their pets and livestock.

"If the family pet, horse or livestock is bitten by a rabid animal, it is at risk of catching the virus if it isn't up to date on its vaccinations," said Perry Durham, D.V.M., State Veterinarian. "Unfortunately if a wild animal bites a family pet that hasn't been vaccinated, the pet will have to be quarantined, perhaps euthanized. Rabies vaccinations will protect your pet and your family from the possibility of the disease."

The rabies virus attacks the nervous system, including the brain and spinal cord. People and animals can get rabies if they are bitten by a rabid animal, or exposed to a rabid animal's brain or spinal fluid. During hunting season, hunters should wear gloves and protective eyewear when field dressing game to prevent the spread of many diseases.

People who are bitten or otherwise exposed to a potentially rabid animal should contact their healthcare provider immediately to get preventative medication. While rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear, preventive medication can prevent the symptoms.

Outdoors enthusiasts who see wild animals acting out of the ordinary or see a large number of dead skunks or foxes should notify local animal control or Game and Fish (24-hour dispatch line: 623-236-7201).

To protect yourself and your family from rabies:

- Avoid touching, handling, or adopting wild or stray animals
- Get your pets vaccinated against rabies (consider your horse and livestock as well)
- Call your healthcare provider and county health department if you are bitten by a wild animal
- Call your veterinarian if your pet is exposed to a wild animal

Livestock, horse and pet owners should speak with their veterinarian about how to their protect animals.

Learn more about rabies at http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/oids/vector/rabies/index.htm.

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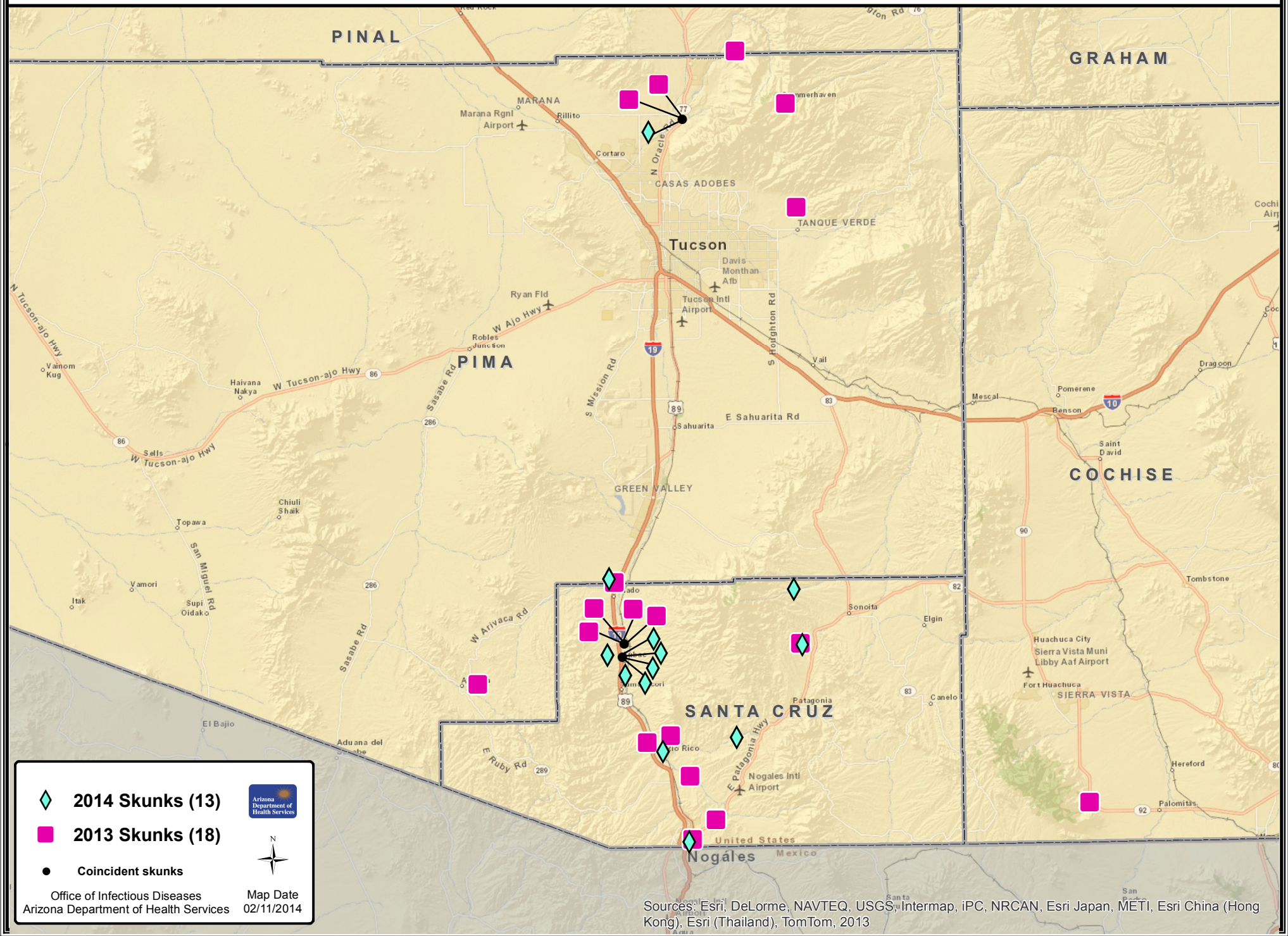
RABIES POSITIVE SKUNKS FOR SOUTHERN ARIZONA (2013-2014)