For Immediate Release | August 7, 2021

Unusual rabies activity detected near Nelson

NELSON – Interior Health and the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) confirmed a case of rabies in a Kootenay Lake region skunk.

It is very unusual for a land-dwelling animal to contract rabies in B.C. and therefore, enhanced rabies surveillance is occurring in the region.

From July 1, 2021 forward, anyone bitten or scratched by a skunk in the region should visit a primary care provider. Any domestic animals or pets bitten or scratched by a skunk should be seen by a veterinarian.

Rabies is transmitted through the bite or scratch of an infected animal. Rabies is not transmitted through urine, feces, or the spray from a skunk.

Anyone who observes a skunk or wild animal acting abnormally should contact the B.C. RAPP line: 1-877-952-RAPP (7277). This could include behaviour unexpected for the animal; such as, being unusually friendly, docile, or overly aggressive.

It is not uncommon to detect rabies in bats. The public is reminded not to pick up or handle bats as bites and scratches from an infected bat can lead to rabies exposure.

How to protect yourself and others from rabies?

- Do not approach, touch, or feed wild or unfamiliar animals, especially those that look sick or wounded.
- If you are bitten or scratched by a bat, skunk or any wild animal, wash the wound with soap and warm water for at least 15 minutes and seek medical care immediately.

How to protect your pets from rabies?

- Vaccinate all pets against rabies regularly.
- Supervise pets when outdoors and keep pets away from wild animals (e.g. dogs on leash)
- Keep pet food indoors or in a secured area to avoid attracting wild animals
- If your pet is bitten or scratched by a wild animal, consult with your veterinarian immediately

For more information about the health impacts of rabies, visit: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/rabies](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/rabies)