

Region 8 Zoonosis Control Newsletter



Public Health Region 8 | Zoonosis Control
Texas Department of State Health Services
[Region 8 - Zoonosis Control](#) | Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

It's Fall, Y'all!	1
Zoonosis News	1
Rabies Update	2-3
Human Notifiable Zoonoses	4
Murine Typhus Trends	4
Murine Typhus	5
Holiday Pet Safety	6
Announcements	7

It's Fall, Y'all!

By: Amanda Kieffer

We are finally getting to enjoy a break from the summer heat and are settling into our Fall routine. We have enjoyed the back-to-school season and attending several of our community health fairs to spread important information about rabies and other diseases. In this month's newsletter, check out our update on murine typhus (also known as flea-borne typhus) and some local trends in this important illness – did you know murine typhus is the most common zoonosis in Region 8?

We hope you enjoy the months ahead and get a chance to celebrate all things spooky and fall!



Zoonosis News

Region 8 Welcomes Zoonosis Intern

We are happy to welcome our first zoonosis intern, Dr. Lisa Hull! Dr. Hull will be interning with us through the Army Career Skills Program for the next several months. We look forward to working with her and learning from her vast experience! Please join us in welcoming Dr. Hull to the Zoo Crew!

Potential Rabies Cure?

Earlier this month, researchers at the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences reported a breakthrough in neutralizing rabies virus in mice. The study demonstrated resolution of disease in rabies-infected mice following monoclonal antibody administration.

You can read the research report here: [EMBO Molecular Medicine](#)



DSHS Region 8 Staff at Karnes Resource Round-Up



Rabies Update

By: Jon Stewart

Annual Rabies Update: January – September 2023

Between January and September of 2023, skunks made up 50% of the positive rabies reports, followed by bats (33%). There were also four foxes (7.5%), three raccoons (5.5%), one cat (2%), and one bovine (2%).

2023 Rabies Cases in Animals, Region 8 January 1, 2023 – October 13, 2023

	Bat	Cat	Dog	Skunk	Raccoon	Fox	Other	All
Atascosa				2				2
Bexar	11							11
Comal	1				1	2		4
DeWitt				1				1
Gillespie		1				1		2
Gonzales				2				2
Guadalupe	3						1 ^A	4
Kendall	1				1			2
Kerr	1			2	1			4
Lavaca				5				5
Victoria	1			14		1		16
Wilson				1				1
Totals	18	1	0	27	3	4	1	54

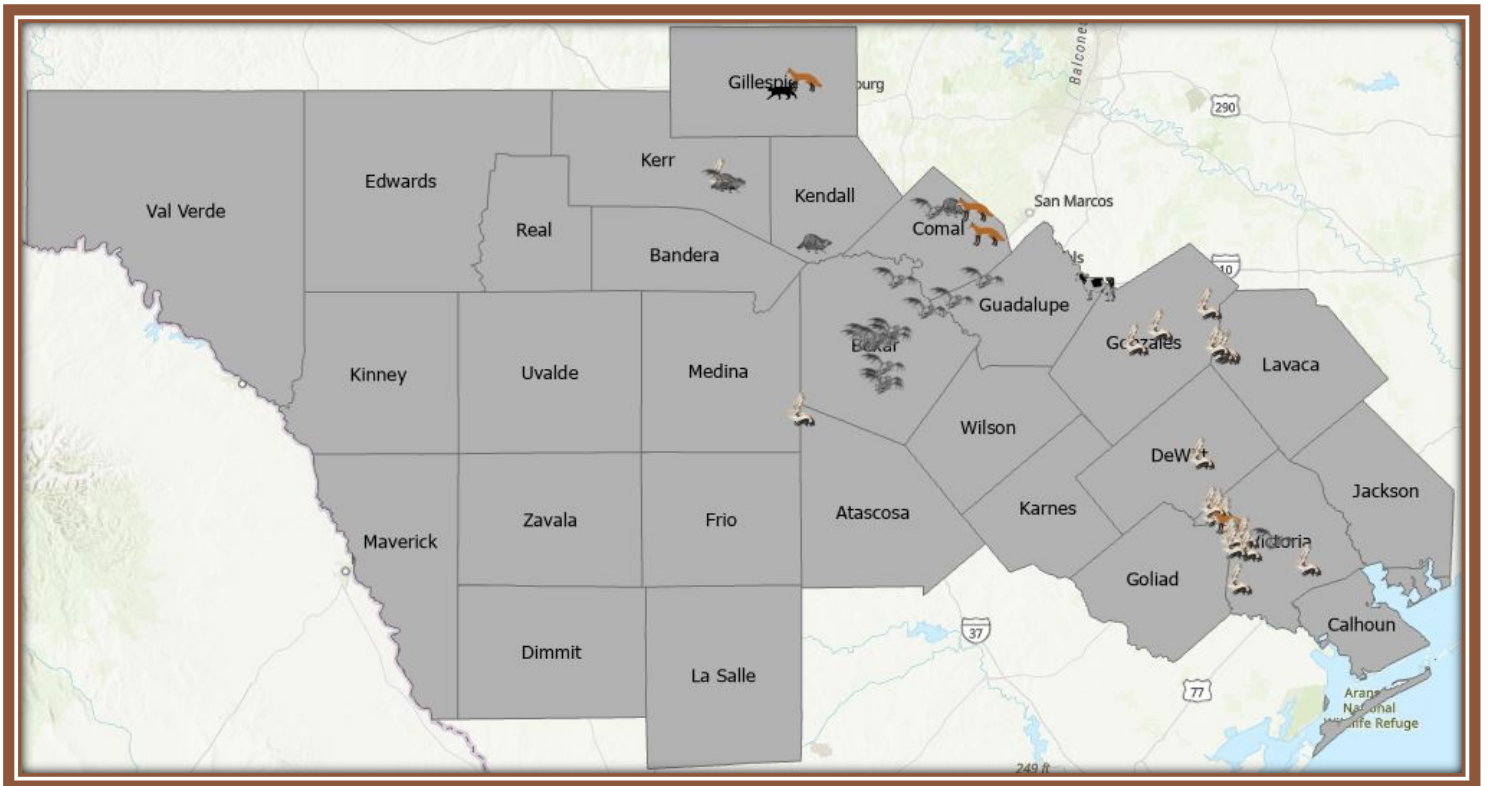
^A – Bovine



Rabies Update *cont.*

By: Jon Stewart

**Map of Positive Animal Rabies Cases, Region 8
January 1, 2023 – October 13, 2023**





Human Notifiable Zoonoses

Reportable Zoonotic Disease Cases in Humans, Region 8* January 1, 2023 – October 13, 2023

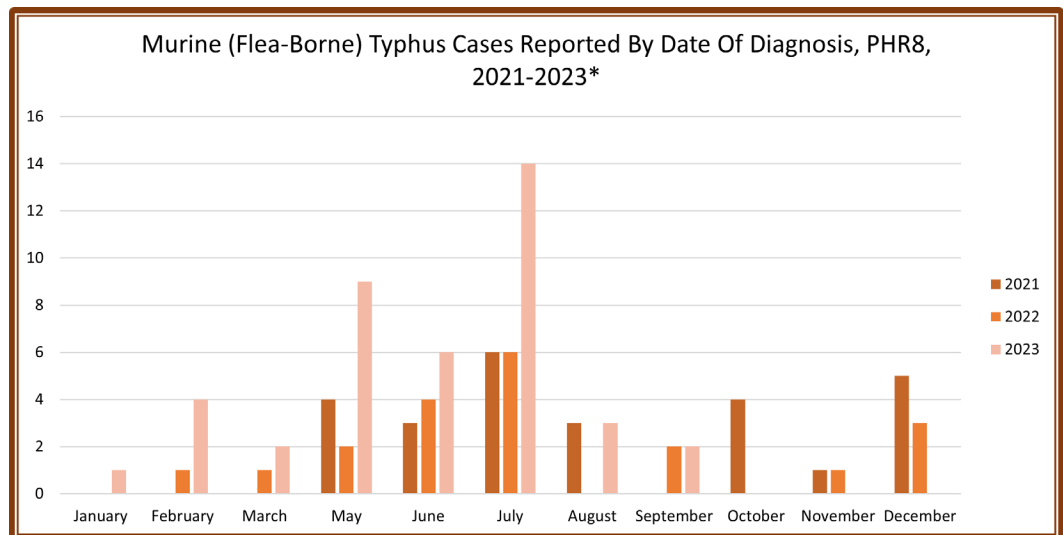
Condition	Confirmed	Probable	Suspect	All
Anaplasma phagocytophilum	1			1
Chagas	1			1
Brucellosis	1			1
Ehrlichiosis		1		1
Lyme	1			1
Malaria ⁺	7			7
Typhus, flea-borne (<i>endemic, murine</i>)	3	41		44
West Nile Virus		1		1
Total	14	43	0	57

* DSHS case counts may differ from those reported by local jurisdictions as DSHS does not report cases until epidemiological investigations are complete. Totals listed do not include those investigated by other Local Health Departments (SAMHD).

+ Case counts from these conditions include travel-related associated infections acquired outside of Texas or outside of the United States by residents of PHR8.

Murine Typhus Trends

This chart represents the total number of confirmed and probable cases of murine typhus reported in Region 8 between 2021 and 2023. This year, we have seen an increased number of cases of murine typhus reported. We saw the highest number of cases in July 2023 with 14, which was up from 6 cases in 2021 and 2022.



*As of 9/30/2023



Murine Typhus

By: Jon Stewart

Murine typhus, also known as flea-borne typhus or endemic typhus, is a disease caused by the bacteria *Rickettsia typhi*. The disease is transmitted by fleas that are infected with the bacteria. Fleas become infected when they bite infected animals, such as rats, cats, or opossums. When an infected flea bites a person or animal, the bite breaks the skin, causing a wound. Fleas poop when they feed. The poop (also called flea dirt) can then be rubbed into the bite wound or other wounds causing infection. People can also breathe in infected flea dirt or rub it into their eyes.

Symptoms of flea-borne typhus typically begin within 2 weeks after contact with infected fleas. However, people may not know they have been bitten by a flea or exposed to flea dirt, so it is important to tell your healthcare provider about time spent outdoors or contact with animals.

Symptoms

- Fever and chills
- Body aches and muscle pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Cough
- Rash (typically occurs around day 5 of illness)



Although most people have mild or no symptoms at all, many people infected with flea-borne typhus may have fever, headache, chills, and muscle aches. If you develop fever, body aches, nausea, vomiting, or rash after exposures to fleas or wild/stray animals, you should see your healthcare provider.

Prevention

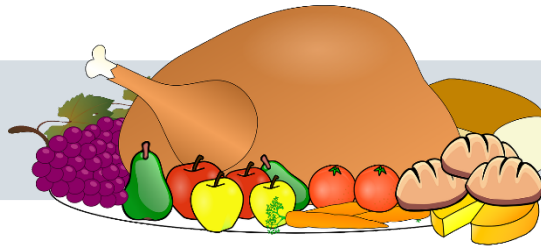
Here are some ways to prevent murine typhus:

- Treat pets for fleas and use EPA-registered insect repellents when outdoors.
- Keep rodents away from your home by sealing up holes, trapping rats and mice, and cleaning up trash.
- Keep your home clean and free of pests.
- Trash and food waste may attract rats and other pests to your home.
- Fleas can be found on stray or wild animals such as cats, rats, and opossums near your home.
- Prevention of murine typhus involves measures to reduce contact with infected fleas. Keeping rodents and other animals away from the home, the workplace, and recreational areas—for example, by removing brush, rock piles, junk, piles of firewood, and food supplies (especially pet food)

For more information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/typhus/murine/>

https://www.cdc.gov/fleas/avoid/on_people.html



Holiday Pet Safety

By: Rachel Panneton

The holiday season is coming up, but so are some hazards for your pets! Here are some tips to keep your pets healthy and safe during the holiday season.

Tips to Keep Pets Safe from Poison Risks

Keep food on the table! Eating turkey or turkey skin, sometimes even a small amount, can cause a life-threatening condition in pets known as pancreatitis. *Fatty foods* are hard for animals to digest, and many foods that are healthy for people are poisonous to pets, including *onions, raisins and grapes*. Even *yeast dough* can cause problems such as painful gas and potentially dangerous bloating. If you want to share a holiday treat with your pet, make or buy a treat that is made just for them!

No pies or other desserts! We all know that *chocolate* can be dangerous for our pets, but do not forget about *xylitol*. The artificial sweetener *xylitol*, commonly used in gum and sugar-free baked goods, can also be deadly if consumed by dogs or cats.

Keep and put trash away! A turkey carcass sitting out on the table or left in an open or easily opened trash container, could be deadly to your family pet. Dispose of turkey carcasses, bones, and anything used to wrap/tie the meat (such as strings, bags, and packaging) in a covered, tightly secured trash bag then placed it in a closed trash container outdoors or behind a closed/locked door away from your pet.

Keep pets away from decorative plants! Some flowers and festive plants can be toxic to pets. Some of these include amaryllis, Baby's Breath, Sweet William, some ferns, hydrangeas, and more. The ASPCA has lists of plants that are toxic to [dogs](#) and [cats](#), but the safest route is simply to keep your pets away from all plants and table decorations.

If Your Pet Ingests Something Harmful

If you know or suspect that your pet has ingested anything that could possibly harm them, **immediately consult a veterinarian, animal emergency clinic, or poison control center**. You can also call the Texas Poison Center Network (800-222-1222) or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (888-426-4435).

Party/Visitor Precautions

Watch exits or keep your pet in a comfortable, safe, secure place! Even if your pets are comfortable around guests, make sure you watch them closely, especially when people are entering or leaving your home. Your pet might make a break for it outside. To help prevent an escape, keep pets confined in a part of the house separate from any holiday activities.

Identification tags & microchips reunite families! Make sure that your pet is wearing a collar with your current contact information on it. Make sure your pet is microchipped and that information is up to date as well. That way, if they do sneak out, they're more likely to be returned to you!

For more information:

<https://www.avma.org/resources/pet-owners/petcare/thanksgiving-pet-safety>

<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/paws-xylitol-its-dangerous-dogs>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/artificial-sweeteners/art-20046936>

Announcements

“Living Among Bats” - CE Course

DSHS Region 7 will host a **FREE** (4.5 hour) Continuing Education Course on **October 26, 2023**, in **Austin, TX**.

To register, please visit our Eventbrite page by clicking [here](#). The deadline to register is **October 20, 2023**.

Please note, your registration for the course is not complete until you receive email confirmation with course logistics from the PHR7 Zoonosis Control Team. If you have questions, please visit the FAQ on our Eventbrite page, or contact course coordinators below.

Melissa.Maass@dshs.texas.gov / 254-771-6749

Amber.Frenzel@dshs.texas.gov / 254-771-6762

DSHS.HSR7.ZOO@dshs.texas.gov / 254-778-6744



Future CE Course Topics

If you have any suggestions or requests for future CE Course topics, please let us know by emailing us at: Region8.Zoonosis@dshs.texas.gov

For More ACO CE Course Information:

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/animal-safety-zoonosis/education-zcb/conferences/aco/dshs-aco-training-course>



ACO Manual Online

The ACO Training Manual is available for **free** on the [DSHS website](#).

Note: Updates to the manual are posted and represented by dates in parenthesis beside each chapter.

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7430 Louis Pasteur Drive

San Antonio, TX 78229

210-949-2000 (Main Office)

210-692-1457 (Fax)

210-949-2121 (24/7 Reporting Line)



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

Contact Us:

Amanda Kieffer

Zoonosis Control Veterinarian
210-949-2048

Jon Stewart

Program Specialist
210-949-2046

Rachel Panneton

Public Health & Prevention Specialist
210-949-2165

