



### Inside this issue:

## DOC'S DESK

Since rising to nine cases in seven counties in early October, our detected rabies activity has plateaued with no more cases reported. Our total remains at: Collingsworth (1 cat); Donley (2 skunks); Randall (1 bat); Gray (1 bat); Lubbock (2 bats); Potter (1 bat); and Wheeler (1 dog). Please keep reminding people to keep their pets up to date on rabies vaccinations and to consider vaccinating livestock, especially those with frequent human contact, high value, or those which would cost a lot to dispose of the carcass.

Zika remains quiet in the Region with only one case of Zika confirmed in the Region this year, in a person who traveled to an endemic area outside of the US. Two cases of locally-acquired Zika infections have been identified in the Rio Grande Valley this year.

West Nile virus was not very active in PHR 1 this year, compared to some prior years. Only nine cases (5 neurologic; 4 fever) have been confirmed so far in 2017, compared to 74 cases (37 neurologic; 37 fever) in 2014. Now that cooler weather has set in, our WNV season should be over until the spring thaw.

Please remember to resume practicing arboviral self-defense when the temperatures begin to rise next spring. The best defenses are to eliminate standing water; use an effective insect repellent; avoid being out when mosquitoes are active; and if a person must be out when mosquitoes are present, wear long sleeves and long pants. Current statistics and counties of occurrence for the arboviruses may be found at <http://www.dshs.texas.gov/idcu/disease/arboviral/WestNile/> and <http://www.texaszika.org/>.

With the advent of colder weather, rodents are looking for food to eat and warm spaces to live. If possible, they will find it in your home, feed room, storage building, etc. Be sure to exclude rodents from dwellings and other spaces humans may enter. Plugging entry points is a major action, along with discouraging the rodents by eliminating cover near your home. Vegetation, wood piles and other debris must be kept away from houses. If possible exposure has occurred and a person begins to have gastrointestinal and respiratory symptoms, medical help is imperative. Be sure to mention the rodent exposure!

As we approach a new calendar year, please remember that our Region is home to a number of zoonoses. We encourage everyone to protect yourself and loved ones as

well as to assist the public with guidance and education when the opportunity arises. We appreciate the part you play in helping our citizens remain safe.

And now for a different topic. After a 43-year career as a veterinarian, 30 of which have been with the state of Texas (~ 7.5 years with the Texas Animal Health Commission; ~22.5 with TDH/DSHS), I have decided to retire January 31, 2018. The career has been interesting, rewarding and challenging, but it is time for some change.

A few people know, but for those who don't, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2015. It was quite an experience with unexpected twists and turns (I think I fell down a rabbit hole and got pulled through a knot hole backwards).

I hadn't paid attention to what the tests were telling me, mainly because I had no family history of prostate cancer. Therefore, I wasn't as diligent as I should have been and didn't act when tests began to indicate I might have a problem. I let a couple of years go by before a lesion was found. While my prostate is gone, I now have four lymph nodes affected and am praying for healing and guidance, while taking steps to clear the cancer. *Please pay attention to what your body is telling you about your health. Don't let something get away from you, like I did.*

But, to borrow a few lines from Willie Nelson's *Me and Paul*:

*It's been rough and rocky travelin'  
But I'm finally standing upright on the ground  
After takin' several readings I'm surprised  
To find my mind's still fairly sound*

Based on my journey, that last line is of great significance, and because of a great speech pathologist, quite true for me! Overall, I'm doing quite well and am optimistic that prayers and therapy will be effective. But it will take time and stress reduction is an important component, hence my retirement so I can have more time with family, including two grandkids in Alaska, and pursuit of life in general, all unencumbered by the job.

I've enjoyed my work in Region 1 and have met and worked with a lot of wonderful, dedicated people. Two of the finest are my team members Karen McDonald and Tonya Finch. Please call on them if assistance is needed after 1/31/18. While I was out with my therapies they kept the Zoonosis Program in Region 1 humming along nicely, and will continue to do so.

It's been a hoot as a high school friend used to say. Thanks for the memories and I hope everyone has a wonderful year in 2018!

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### PHR 1 ZONOSIS STAFF

James Alexander, DVM, MPVM  
Regional Veterinarian

[james.alexander@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:james.alexander@dshs.texas.gov)  
Tonya Finch  
Public Health & Prevention Specialist  
[tonya.finch@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:tonya.finch@dshs.texas.gov)

300 Victory Drive  
WTAMU Box 60968  
Canyon, TX 79016-0968  
806-477-1104  
806-655-6448(Fax)

Karen McDonald, MS  
Zoonosis Control Specialist  
[karen.mcdonald@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:karen.mcdonald@dshs.texas.gov)

6302 Lola Avenue  
Lubbock, TX 79424  
806-783-6422  
806-783-6466 (Fax)

### Regional Website

<http://www.dshs.texas.gov/idcu/health/zoonosis>

# No Bones (or Bone Treats) About It: Reasons Not to Give Your Dog Bones

Many dog owners know not to toss a turkey or chicken bone to their dog; those bones are just too brittle. But the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says the risk goes beyond that, especially when it comes to the "bone treats" you may see at the store.

## What's a Bone Treat?

FDA has received about 68 reports of pet illnesses related to "bone treats," which differ from uncooked butcher-type bones because they are processed and packaged for sale as dog treats. A variety of commercially-available bone treats for dogs—including treats described as "Ham Bones," "Pork Femur Bones," "Rib Bones," and "Smokey Knuckle Bones"—were listed in the reports. The products may be dried through a smoking process or by baking, and may contain other ingredients such as preservatives, seasonings, and smoke flavorings.

So if you're planning to give your dog a stocking full of bone treats this holiday season, you may want to reconsider. According to Carmela Stamper, a veterinarian in the Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) at the FDA, "Giving your dog a bone treat might lead to an unexpected trip to your veterinarian, a possible emergency surgery, or even death for your pet."

## Illnesses Reported

Illnesses reported to FDA by owners and veterinarians in dogs that have eaten bone treats have included:

Gastrointestinal obstruction (blockage in the digestive tract)

Choking

Cuts and wounds in the mouth or on the tonsils

Vomiting

Diarrhea

Bleeding from the rectum, and/or

Death. Approximately fifteen dogs reportedly died after eating a bone treat.

The reports, sent in by pet owners and veterinarians, involved about 90 dogs (some reports included more than one dog). In addition, FDA received seven reports of product problems, such as moldy-appearing bones, or bone treats splintering when chewed by the pet.

## Tips to Keep Your Dog Safe

Here are some tips to keep your dog safe:

Chicken bones and other bones from the kitchen table can cause injury when chewed by pets, too. So be careful to keep platters out of reach when you're cooking or the family is eating.

Be careful what you put in the trash can. Dogs are notorious for helping themselves to the turkey carcass or steak bones disposed of there.

Talk with your veterinarian about other toys or treats that are most appropriate for your dog. There are many available products made with different materials for dogs to chew on.

"We recommend supervising your dog with any chew toy or treat, especially one she hasn't had before," adds Stamper. "And if she 'just isn't acting right,' call your veterinarian right away!"

## WINTER AND HOLIDAY HEALTH HAZARDS FOR ANIMALS

Texas Department of State Health Services, Zoonosis Control

With the arrival of the winter months and holiday season, there are additional health hazards that are of concern for animals; some are potentially fatal. A few of these health risks could be brought into the home inadvertently, thereby increasing a pet's possibility of exposure. To keep the season safe, protect animals from contact with or ingestion of the following:

1. **Antifreeze** - this mixture contains ethylene glycol, a product that can cause lethal kidney failure and metabolic acidosis (accumulation of acid in the blood and body tissues) if ingested. It has a sweet taste that attracts animals and can be toxic in small doses (i.e. 1-2 tablespoons can produce toxicity in a medium-sized dog). Antifreeze can be toxic even when diluted in water.

At least one brand of antifreeze is available that uses propylene glycol for the active component as an alternative to ethylene glycol. Larger quantities of the propylene glycol-based antifreeze usually have to be swallowed to produce toxicity as compared to ethylene glycol-based antifreeze. Additionally, propylene glycol-based antifreeze does not metabolize in the animal's system to form products that cause kidney damage; however, it can still cause illness and death via metabolic acidosis.

An antidote is available for antifreeze poisoning, but early recognition of ingestion and immediate intensive treatment are imperative for the survival of the animal. The best medicine, though, is to prevent animals from being in contact with this toxic substance by having antifreeze changed by a professional who knows how to properly dispose of it. If individuals change their own antifreeze, they should not drain it into the sewer or leave it setting out in a pan for any amount of time (all it takes is a few seconds for an animal to ingest it). It is worth noting that some snow globes may contain this product as well, so keep them out of reach from your pets.

2. **Chocolate** - Baker's or baking chocolate is the form of chocolate that contains a higher concentration of stimulant (theobromine) than either semi-sweet or regular milk chocolate. The extent of toxicity an animal exhibits after consuming chocolate is based on a variety of factors, such as the type of chocolate ingested, the size of the animal, or an animal's individual sensitivity to chocolate. Dogs in particular are attracted to sweet treats. Some typical clinical signs of chocolate toxicity include excessive excitability, restlessness, increased heart rate, muscle tremors, vomiting, and diarrhea. The last two clinical signs may be transiently present due to an animal consuming any amount of chocolate (i.e., any ingestion of chocolate may cause gastrointestinal upset, but not extensive toxicity). The literature gives a wide range of toxic levels, so a veterinarian should be consulted immediately to discuss the appropriate action to be taken if an animal has consumed chocolate. There is no specific antidote for chocolate toxicity. Animals can be treated by a veterinarian to address any clinical signs they are exhibiting; vomiting may be induced within 2 hours of the chocolate consumption depending on the amount ingested and other factors.

3. **Xylitol** - another dangerous substance associated with sweet treats is xylitol. Xylitol is an artificial sweetener found in sugar-free products, such as gum, candy, and baked goods. In dogs, even a small dose of xylitol can cause toxic effects; it can also be fatal. If a dog consumes xylitol, it can cause hypoglycemia (sudden decrease in blood glucose) and/or liver failure. If you suspect that your dog has eaten a sugar-free product with xylitol, you should take it to a veterinarian immediately, as signs of toxicity can start within 30 minutes of ingestion (signs could also be delayed for a few days). Some of the clinical signs of xylitol toxicity in dogs include weakness, lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle tremors, seizures, anemia, increased thirst, increased urination, and bloody or tarry feces. There have been some indications that ferrets may react to xylitol in the same way that dogs do.



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4. **Mistletoe** - the berry of this plant is the most toxic component, especially if it is chewed instead of swallowed whole. If the berry is ingested in sufficient quantity, it can cause gastrointestinal and neurological signs, including convulsions.

5. **Poinsettia** - whether or not this plant is toxic has been debated for years. The most recent findings are that it contains no toxic chemical. However, as with any plant that an animal is not accustomed to eating, it can cause diarrhea and vomiting (a protective mechanism to eliminate the foreign substance). Animals tend to be attracted to poinsettias, so it is a good practice to keep these plants out of their reach.

6. **Ivy** - this plant is not acutely toxic, but it can cause gastrointestinal upset if ingested.

7. **Christmas cactus** - this plant is nontoxic, but it can cause vomiting and transient diarrhea if consumed.

8. **Tinsel** - cats in particular are attracted to playing with Christmas tree tinsel. If ingested, it can cause an intestinal blockage or intussusception (prolapsing of one part of the intestine into the cavity of an immediately adjoining part). If indoor cats are present, it would be prudent to avoid using strands of tinsel. It would also be advisable to place breakable ornaments at the top of the tree. An investment in shatterproof ornaments might also be worthwhile.

9. **Glow jewelry**<sup>1</sup> - dibutyl phthalate is a chemical contained in glow-in-the-dark jewelry, which are popular items at a variety of festivities. Although the chemical may have the potential to cause death via respiratory paralysis, cats generally will only ingest a minimal amount due to its unpleasant taste and the fact that only a small amount of the chemical is present in the jewelry. Cats that have bitten into the jewelry may exhibit heavy salivation, hyperactivity, and aggressive behavior, but they typically recover within minutes. Immediately after a cat happens to ingest this chemical, it helps to feed it small quantities of milk, canned food, or tuna juice to dilute the chemical in its mouth. Wash off any drops of the chemical that might be on the cat's coat and flush the cat's eyes with water if there has been ocular exposure. There is no known antidote for dibutyl phthalate; cats that have ingested large quantities should be closely monitored and given supportive treatment if warranted.

10. **Cold** - the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's *Animal Welfare Act* recommends that ambient temperature should not drop below 50 degrees Fahrenheit, especially when sick, aged, or young animals are present. If it does, plan to supplement the animal's environment with auxiliary heating and additional bedding. Additionally, animals should always be provided with adequate protection and shelter from the direct effect of wind, rain, or snow. Remember, animals in Texas are not acclimated to cold weather, so they must be protected from extreme weather conditions accordingly.

If you know or suspect that an animal has ingested any of the above items (1-9), immediately consult a veterinarian, animal emergency clinic, or poison control center.

The Texas Poison Center Network can be reached at 1-800-222-1222. The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center can be reached at 1-800-548-2423.

Thanks is given to Dr. John C. Haliburton, former Head of Diagnostic Toxicology for the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory in Amarillo, for his assistance and expertise in preparing this article.

<sup>1</sup>Rosendale, ME. *Veterinary Medicine* 1999; August:703.

## KEY FACTS for People Exhibiting Pigs at Fairs

### Who is at high risk of serious illness from variant virus infections?

- People who are at high risk for serious complications ([http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high\\_risk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm)) from flu, including variant flu viruses like H3N2v, include children younger than 5 years, people with certain long-term health conditions like asthma and other lung diseases, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems, neurological or neurodevelopmental conditions, as well as pregnant women and people 65 years and older.
- Most of the people hospitalized because of variant virus infections have had one of these factors that put them at high risk.



### Background

Pigs may be infected with swine influenza viruses that are different from human flu viruses. Swine flu viruses spread among pigs and – while rare – they can spread from pigs to people too. When that happens, these viruses are called variant viruses and are designated with the letter “v” after the virus subtype. Human infections with H1N1v, H3N2v and H1N2v viruses have been detected in the United States.

Spread of swine flu viruses from a pig to a person is thought to happen in the same way that human flu viruses spread; mainly through droplets when infected pigs cough or sneeze. This has happened in different settings, especially at fairs where pigs from many places come in close contact with each other and with people.

Exposure to pigs, especially close contact with pigs, is the main risk factor for infection with variant influenza viruses. While most illness with these viruses has been mild, serious illness, including illness resulting in hospitalization, has happened. To protect those most likely to get infected and develop serious illness, CDC and 4-H National Headquarters recommend exhibitors (and their friends or family) take the following actions to help prevent the spread of flu between pigs and people.

### Recommendations for Fair Exhibitors with High Risk Factors:

- Anyone at high risk of serious flu complications planning to attend a fair where pigs will be present should avoid pigs and swine barns at the fair.
- This includes pig exhibitors and family members with high risk factors.
- This may mean that exhibitors with one or more high risk factors do not show their pig(s) this year.

National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases  
Influenza Division



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### **Recommendations for Fair Exhibitors Not at High Risk:**

- If you are responsible for the care of pigs, watch them for illness (like loss of appetite, cough or runny nose). Call a veterinarian if you suspect illness.
- Avoid close contact with pigs that look or act ill and notify the fair veterinarian and/or the fair manager that your pig may be ill.
- Take protective measures if you must come in contact with pigs that are known or suspected to be sick. This includes wearing protective clothing, gloves and masks that cover your mouth and nose. (This is called "personal protective equipment" or PPE.)
- To further reduce the risk of infection, minimize contact with pigs in the pig barn and arenas.

### **As always, take the following preventive actions:**

- Don't eat or drink or put anything in your mouth in the pig barn and show arena.
- Don't take toys, pacifiers, cups, bottles, strollers, or similar items into the pig barn and show arenas.
- Wash your hands often with soap and running water before and after exposure to pigs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home to avoid spreading your illness.

### **What to do if you get sick:**

- Flu symptoms usually include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.
- If you are at high risk and you get flu symptoms, call a health care provider. Tell them about your high risk factor and your symptoms. If you have had recent exposure to pigs, tell them about that too.
- If you are not at high risk and you get flu symptoms after exposure to pigs, seek medical care as you normally would.
- A health care provider can decide whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.
- Influenza antiviral drugs can treat variant virus infections as well as seasonal flu illness in people.
- These drugs work better the sooner you start them, so seek medical treatment promptly if you get symptoms and are at high risk.



### **For more information:**

Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)/TTY: 1-888-232-6348  
 Contact CDC Info: <http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/requestform.html>  
 Information on Influenza A (H3N2) Variant Viruses ("H3N2v")  
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/h3n2v-cases.htm>







**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

Texas Department of State  
Health Services

300 Victory Drive  
WTAMU Box 60968

Phone: 806-477-1104

Fax: 806-655-6448

E-mail: james.alexander@dshs.state.tx.us

Dallam	Sherman	Hansford	Ochiltree	Lipscomb	
Hartley	Moore	Hutchinson	Roberts	Hemphill	
Oldham	Patter	Carson	Gray	Wheeler	
Deaf Smith	Randall	Armstrong	Danley	Collingsworth	
Farmer	Castro	Swisher	Briscoe	Hall	Childress
Bailey	Lamb	Hale	Floyd	Motley	
Cochran	Heckley	Lubbock	Crosby	Dickens	King
Veakum	Terry	Lynn	Garza		

### Navigating to the Zoonosis Branch website

Have a hard time remembering <http://www.dshs.texas.gov/idcu/health/zoonosis/> every time you search for information on the Zoonosis website? Well, we do too. Domain names for various areas on our site have been around for a long time and are often provided when directing individuals to specific pages. They're quick, easy-to-remember links that get you to where you want to be faster. Dr. Laura Robinson in the Austin office was kind enough to remind us of five that we use frequently. They are not case-sensitive, but some parts are capitalized to make them easier to remember:

Zoonosis Control home page: [www.TexasZoonosis.org](http://www.TexasZoonosis.org)

ZC rabies home page: [www.TexasRabies.org](http://www.TexasRabies.org)

ZC oral rabies vaccination program home page:  
[www.TexasORVP.org](http://www.TexasORVP.org)

ZC animal control home page: [www.TexasACO.org](http://www.TexasACO.org)

ZC West Nile virus home page: [www.TxWestNile.org](http://www.TxWestNile.org)

DSHS Zika Page: [www.TexasZika.org](http://www.TexasZika.org)

### **Continuing Education for Veterinarians, Veterinary Technicians, Registered Sanitarians and Animal Control Officers**

The Texas Department of State Health Services Oral Rabies Vaccination Program (ORVP) is an innovative program that uses oral rabies vaccine to control rabies in wildlife. The program was implemented to address two rabies epizootics, including one in coyotes in South Texas and one in gray foxes in West-Central Texas. The baits containing the oral rabies vaccine are distributed aurally in designated areas.

Veterinarians, veterinary technicians, registered sanitarians and animal control officers can receive continuing education credits, **up to 5 hours**, for visiting the ORVP field locations to learn about the epizootics and the field work being conducted to control them.

Attendance at the Texas 2018 ORVP is available in Zapata (Jan. 10-12), Del Rio (Jan. 14-18), and Alpine (Jan. 20-22). **Please note that all dates are approximate; they are contingent upon weather conditions at each location.** Morning or afternoon CE presentations are scheduled on specific days at each site.

Please contact Dr. Laura Robinson, ORVP Director, Zoonosis Control Branch, Texas Department of State Health Services, by email at [laura.robinson@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:laura.robinson@dshs.texas.gov) to make arrangements for visiting the ORVP Command Center. Or call (512) 776-7255 and ask the receptionist to forward you to the Zoonosis Control Branch.