

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

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Spooky Season Is Here

By: Amanda Kieffer

As the cooler air rolls in, we're embracing the season of pumpkin spice and all things nice! With Halloween just around the corner, it's a perfect time to remind the community about zoonotic diseases like rabies and arboviruses – key information to keep our communities safe during this busy time of year. We also provide hunter safety tips and share an article on tasty fall treats for our pets, because they deserve to enjoy the season too! Stay cozy, enjoy the fall weather, and, as always, keep up the great work protecting our four-legged and two-legged friends.

Zoonosis News

2025 Rabies Poster Contest

Calling all K-12 students! The Rabies Awareness and Prevention Poster Contest is a great way to educate kids about the dangers of animal bites and rabies. The contest is open to Texas K-12 students from public, private, charter, and homeschool groups. Students can showcase their artistic talents and win prizes for best poster by grade level. Submissions start March 3, 2025. Visit link below to learn more!

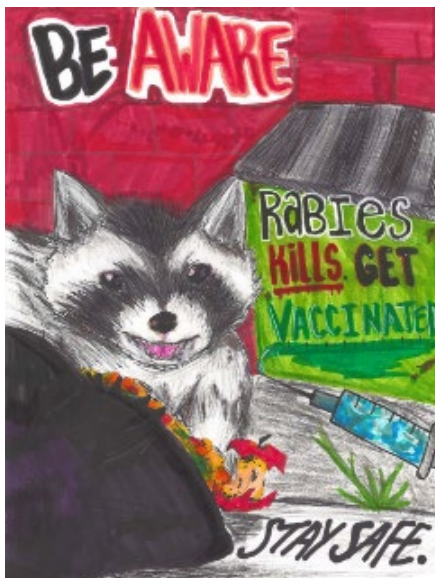
[Rabies Awareness and Prevention Poster Contest | Texas DSHS](#)

Updated Animal Import and Export Requirements

There have been recent updates to CDC Animal Import and Export Requirements. Please see the links below for more information.

[Animal Import and Export Requirements | Texas DSHS](#)

[Bringing an Animal into the U.S. | CDC](#)



1st place winner for the 6th - 8th grade level
2024 Rabies Poster Contest



Rabies Update

By: Jon Stewart

Rabies Update: January – October 2024

Between January and October of 2024, bats made up 41% of all positive cases reported, with a total of thirty-one bats. This was followed by twenty-three skunks (30%), fourteen foxes (18%), five cats (7%), and two raccoons (3%).

2024 Rabies Cases in Animals, Region 8 January 1, 2024 – October 29, 2024

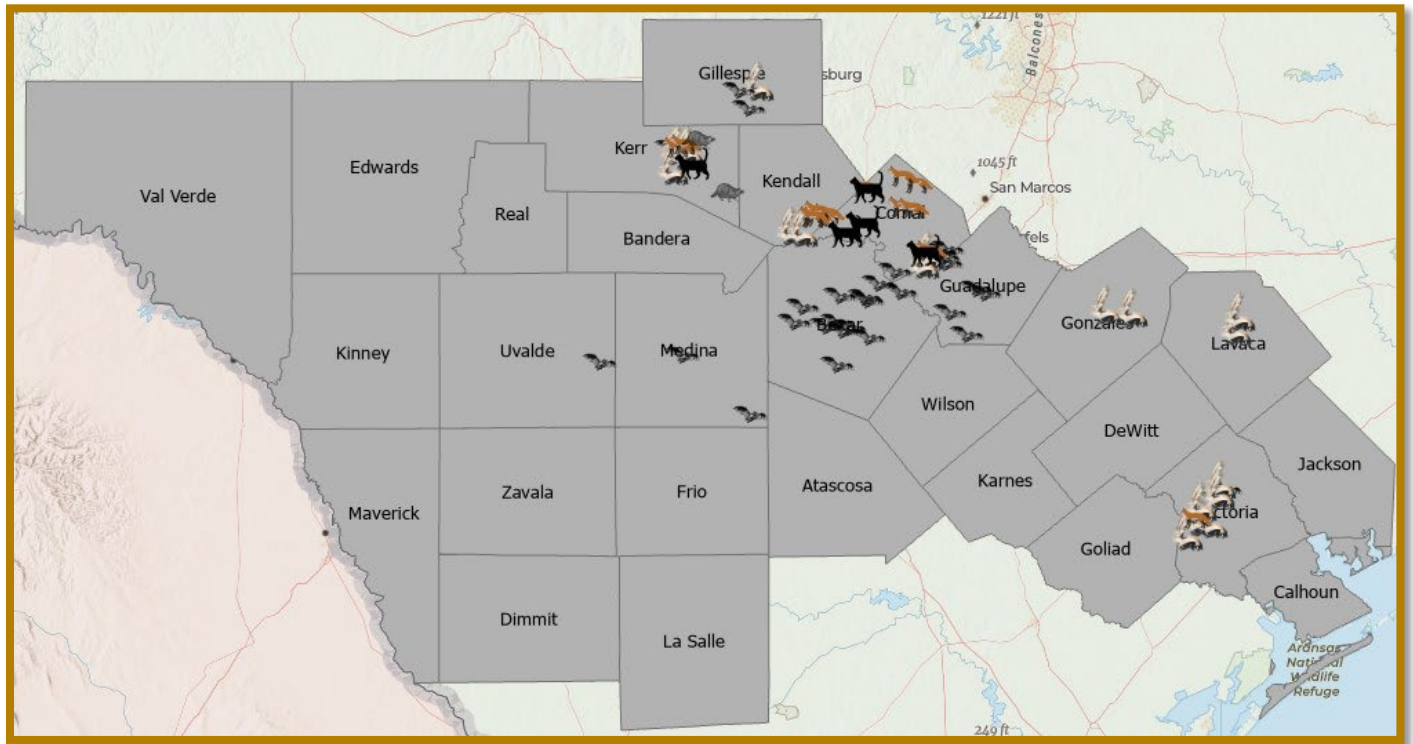
County	Bat	Cat	Dog	Fox	Raccoon	Skunk	Other	All
Bexar	12							12
Comal	5	4		6		2		17
Gillespie	2					1		3
Gonzales						2		2
Guadalupe	6							6
Kendall				5		2		7
Kerr	1	1		2	2	7		13
Lavaca						2		2
Medina	2							2
Uvalde	1							1
Victoria	2			1		7		10
Total	31	5	0	14	2	23	0	75



Rabies Update Map

By: Jon Stewart

**Map of Positive Animal Rabies Cases, Region 8
January 1, 2024 – October 29, 2024**



Human Notifiable Zoonoses

**Reportable Zoonotic Disease Cases in Humans, Region 8*
January 1, 2024 – October 29, 2024**

Condition	Confirmed	Probable	Suspect	All
Chagas		1		1
Dengue**	1	4	1	6
Malaria+	4			4
Typhus, flea-borne (<i>endemic, murine</i>)	1	23		23
Total	6	28	1	35

* 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 infections acquired outside of Texas or outside of the United States by residents of PHR 8.

On the Hunt for Zoonotic Disease: Tips for Hunting Season

By: Amanda Kieffer

As hunting season begins, it's important to be mindful of the health risks that come with being outdoors and handling wild game. Zoonotic diseases can be a real concern for hunters, but with some simple precautions, you can enjoy a successful hunt while keeping yourself safe.

When handling game, always wear gloves to reduce the risk of infection. Illnesses like *brucellosis* and other diseases can be transmitted through contact with infected animal tissues, so it's important to protect yourself. Don't forget to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling any game, as this simple step can help prevent illness.



Cooking your game meat to the proper internal temperature is also crucial. Wild meats should be cooked to at least 165°F – 185°F to kill harmful organisms like *trichinellosis*, *salmonellosis*, and *toxoplasmosis*. Undercooked or improperly handled meat can pose a serious health risk, so be sure to use a meat thermometer and follow food safety guidelines. Sure, medium-rare might be your style, but this is one time you'll want to aim for well-done.

While you're out in the field, remember to protect yourself from insect bites. Ticks, mosquitoes, and fleas can transmit diseases such as *West Nile fever* and *murine typhus*. Wearing insect repellent and checking yourself for ticks after a day outdoors can help reduce your risk.

Hunters should also be aware of the potential for exposure to *Chagas disease*, especially if spending the night in hunting shelters or stands. *Chagas disease* is transmitted by triatomine insects, commonly known as "kissing bugs." These insects are attracted to rustic shelters and can bite hunters during the night, transmitting *Trypanosoma cruzi*, the parasite that causes Chagas disease. To minimize risk, ensure that your shelter is well-sealed, use insect repellent, and consider sleeping in insect-proof bedding or tents.

Another consideration in the hunting environment is exposure to infectious diseases from contaminated soil and water. Hunters and their dogs can be affected by harmful bacteria and parasites like *leptospirosis* and *giardia* by drinking untreated water sources or coming into contact with contaminated soil or mud through cuts or open wounds. To reduce risk, always purify water from streams or lakes before drinking and avoid direct contact with soil if you have any breaks in your skin. In addition, talk to your veterinarian about vaccines to prevent these and other diseases in dogs.



By taking these precautions, you can enjoy the hunting season while minimizing your chances of contracting a zoonotic disease. Stay safe, stay informed, and happy hunting!

For more information:

<https://www.avma.org/resources/public-health/disease-precautions-hunters>

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/meat/roasting-those-other-holiday-meats>

Arboviral Disease Updates

By: Jon Stewart

As global travel continues to expand and climate change affects mosquito habitats, understanding arboviral diseases has become increasingly important for travelers and healthcare providers alike. Three significant viruses - Dengue, West Nile, and Oropouche - present unique challenges to public health and travel safety.



Dengue Fever:

Dengue fever, caused by four distinct but related viruses (DENV 1-4), has emerged as one of the most significant mosquito-borne diseases worldwide. Transmitted primarily through the bite of *Aedes* mosquitoes, dengue presents with severe headaches, high fever reaching 104°F, intense muscle and joint pain, and a characteristic rash. What makes dengue particularly concerning is its potential to develop into severe forms, including hemorrhagic fever and shock syndrome.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains a Watch Level 1 ("Practice Usual Precautions") for numerous tropical and subtropical regions, with particular attention to Brazil, Caribbean regions, and Southeast Asian countries. Despite its widespread presence in over 100 countries, the CDC has not issued any "Do Not Travel" advisories specifically for dengue.

West Nile Virus:

West Nile Virus, primarily transmitted by *Culex* mosquitoes, presents a different challenge. Unlike dengue, 80% of infected individuals remain asymptomatic, making surveillance and control more complicated. When symptoms do appear, they typically manifest as fever, headache, body aches, and occasionally, a rash. In rare cases (about 1%), severe neurological complications can develop, including encephalitis and meningitis.

Peak transmission occurs during mosquito season, typically from summer through fall. As of October 29, 2024, Texas has reported 111 cases of West Nile Virus in humans, which is an increase from previous years. The TX Department of State Health Services provides weekly arbovirus activity reports, which you can view [here](#).

Oropouche:

Oropouche virus, though less familiar to many travelers, deserves attention, particularly for those visiting South and Central America. Transmitted by both biting midges (*Culicoides paraensis*) and mosquitoes, this virus causes sudden onset fever, severe headache, and joint pain. While symptoms typically resolve within a week, the virus can occasionally lead to meningitis.

The CDC hasn't issued specific travel advisories for Oropouche virus, partly due to limited surveillance data. However, its presence in Brazil, Peru, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago warrants attention from travelers to these regions.

Arboviral Disease Updates Continued

Prevention: A Universal Approach

Despite their differences, prevention strategies for all three viruses share common elements. The CDC recommends:

- Using EPA-registered insect repellents
- Wearing protective clothing (long sleeves and pants)
- Staying in screened or air-conditioned accommodations
- Using bed nets in endemic areas
- Avoiding outdoor activities during peak mosquito hours
- Eliminating standing water near living areas

Travel Recommendations

Travelers should take several preparatory steps before visiting affected regions:

1. Consult current CDC travel advisories
2. Obtain comprehensive travel health insurance
3. Identify reliable medical facilities at their destination
4. Pack basic first aid supplies
5. Know the symptoms that warrant immediate medical attention

For immunocompromised individuals or pregnant women, consultation with healthcare providers before travel is essential, as these conditions can increase the risk of severe disease.

Remember, while these viruses pose significant health risks, informed preparation and consistent mosquito bite prevention measures can significantly reduce the risk of infection. Travelers should remain vigilant but not let fear of these diseases deter them from exploring affected regions with proper precautions in place.



Pet Safe Holiday Foods

By: Rachel Panneton

The holiday season is here and so are the foods that come along with it!

Make sure that the food from your plate is safe to give to your four-legged family members.

Some Safe Human Foods for Dogs & Cats

Below are just a few of the many safe foods for dogs and cats that are common around this time of year. Just keep in mind these foods are only safe for pets to eat when they are plain and in moderation as a treat.

Carrots: Raw or cooked, in bite sized pieces, plain, without salt, fat, butter, oils, or spices.

Cranberries: Powdered, dried, fresh (no preservatives, spices or added sugar).

Green Beans: Fresh, frozen, cooked, or dehydrated, in bite sized pieces, without any added salt, fats, or sauces.

Pumpkin: Canned, cooked, pureed, with no added salt and no added sweeteners (including xylitol), or spices (cinnamon, cardamom, anise, allspice, or other common pumpkin pie spices).

Sweet Potatoes: Plain, cooked, with no added sweeteners, salt, or spices, in bite sized pieces. Only small amounts for cats!

Turkey: Cooked, skinless, boneless, in bite sized pieces, without gravy, salt, spices, or fats.

White Potatoes: Baked or boiled, never raw or fried (ex. broiled latkes are OK). Plain, no added fats or salt, in bite sized pieces.

Moderation is Key!

Even though the foods listed above are safe for your pet, remember you should only give them in moderation! Too many new and different foods in a short amount of time could upset your pet's stomach.

Also, always remember to check the ingredient label before giving anything to your pet!

For more information:

<https://www.rover.com/blog/holiday-food-safety-guide-pets/>

<https://www.purina.com/articles/dog/health/nutrition/holiday-human-foods-dogs-can-and-cant-eat>

<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/advice/thanksgiving-foods-for-dogs/>



Dr. Kieffer's Homemade Dog Treat Recipe

If you don't want your pet feeling left out, the best way to include them is to get them a special treat of their own!

Peanut Butter & Pumpkin Dog Treats

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups whole wheat flour
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup canned pumpkin
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Directions

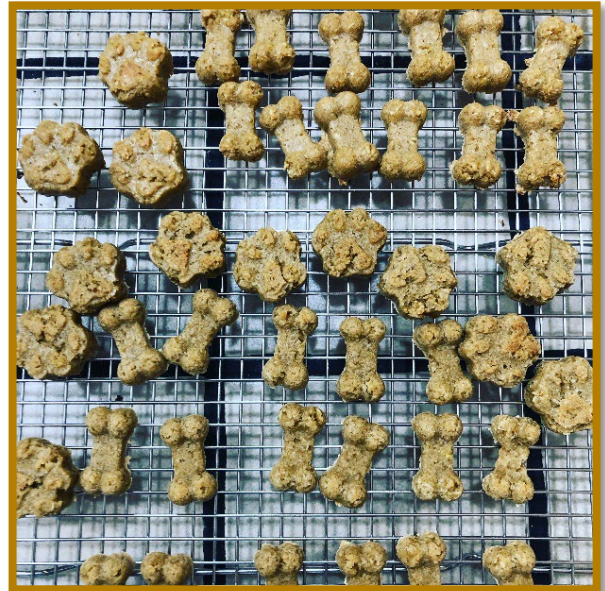
Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).

Whisk together the flour, eggs, pumpkin, peanut butter, salt, and cinnamon in a bowl. Add water as needed to help make the dough workable, but the dough should be dry and stiff. To shape, fill a dog treat silicone baking mold with dough or roll 1/2-inch-thick and cut into desired shapes with cookie cutters.

Bake in preheated oven until hard, about 40 minutes.

Enjoy!

Source: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/133123/peanut-butter-and-pumpkin-dog-treats/>



Announcements

Diseases in Nature Conference (DIN)

DIN is a conference highlighting epidemiological investigations, clinical case studies, basic and applied research, and other topics in emerging and current zoonotic and environmentally-acquired infectious diseases. The conference's goal is to increase knowledge and awareness of these diseases within the veterinary, medical, public health, and academic research communities.

Location: Westin San Antonio North
(9821 Colonnade Boulevard, San Antonio, TX 78230)

Date: May 21st – 23rd, 2025

For more information: <https://www.diseasesinnature.com>



Bats & Rabies Seminars

DSHS Regions 8, 9/10, and 11 Zoonosis Control Programs will partner with Texas Parks and Wildlife to provide Bats & Rabies Seminars at multiple locations in January 2025. Registration & location details will be announced at a future date. Stay Tuned!

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Health and Human
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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/notifiable-conditions/zoonosis-control/education/animal-control-officers/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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