

## Board of health approves new rabies regulations

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

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Members of the Board of Health kicked off their June meeting with a public hearing to discuss proposed changes to the Northeast Colorado Health Department's rabies regulations. With no objections raised, the board moved forward to adopt the new regulations, which go into effect July 1.

According to Pam Lindenthal, an environmental health representative with NCHD and the zoonotic communicable disease team lead, the main reason for the changes was to bring the regulations up to date from their 1999 version and to better match the intent and verbiage of the Colorado Rabies Resource Guide, as well as the regulations that are in place from the state health department.

The proposed changes were a result of a great deal of input from stakeholders with representatives from NCHD, local law enforcement, the Logan and Morgan County Humane Societies, the Colorado Department of Agriculture, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, as well as several local veterinarians.

The revised Northeast Colorado Health Department Rabies Prevention and Control Regulations are available online at [www.nchd.org](http://www.nchd.org).

Lindenthal said the changes that will most affect the general public are that the regulations now reference ferrets, as well as dogs and cats, in regards to animals in northeast Colorado that must be vaccinated for rabies and that staff from NCHD will be much more diligent in their follow-up on animal bites.

"The stakeholder process we engaged in really spurred some action with our partner agencies," said Lindenthal. "I think there's a better understanding now between law enforcement, veterinarians and public health concerning each of our roles in helping to prevent the spread of rabies. That knowledge will result in better and more timely follow-up on animal bites."

Board members were also brought up to date regarding a problem with the water supply at the Wayward Wind Mobile Home Park in Fort Morgan and NCHD's role in helping to ensure the

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residents were informed and had access to safe water.

According to Dr. Tony Cappello, NCHD's district public health administrator, owners of the Wayward Wind were notified by the state health department on Thursday, June 21 that there was a break in their water main and a boil water order was issued, which is standard procedure any time a loss of pressure occurs.

A couple of hours after that, the order was changed to a bottled water advisory due to the presence of high nitrates in the water. Boiling water that already has nitrates in it can increase the level of nitrates, making it unsafe for anyone to consume.

"We were a little concerned at this point in time that the two separate, conflicting advisories, coming so close together, could be confusing to the residents at the Wayward Wind, and it was really important that they not consume any more boiled water," said Cappello. "We were also concerned that they may not have immediate access to safe water, so we gathered some of our Fort Morgan staff and took a team out to go door-to-door, distributing information and bottled water and answering questions from concerned residents."

NCHD was able to secure about a third of the bottled water with the help of Steve Enfante, Morgan County's emergency manager, who was able to procure a \$100 donation from Walmart. Cappello went on to tell the board that NCHD is currently working with Wayward Wind in pursuing a long-term solution to the problem that will allow them to continue to provide safe water for their residents.

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