

DFW News



DFW STAFF, WILDLIFE

DFW Confirms Increase of Canine Distemper Virus in Wild Foxes in Siskiyou County

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The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has recently seen an increased number of confirmed and suspect cases of canine distemper virus (CDV) in wild gray foxes in the Mount Shasta and Scott Valley areas in Siskiyou County.

Most of California's carnivore species are susceptible to CDV, with gray foxes, skunks and other mustelids also being highly susceptible. CDV is not transmissible to humans.

CDV is transmitted among carnivores by contact with oral, respiratory and ocular fluids and other body fluids (feces and urine) containing the virus. Animals with the virus may not show clinical signs but can still spread the virus for up to 90 days. Although infections in domestic dogs have been reduced through vaccination, infected dogs that have contact with or share food with wild carnivores can transmit the virus to wildlife. The virus also spreads among wild carnivores and mostly affects susceptible young animals. Distemper can cause respiratory, neurologic and gastrointestinal illness in foxes. Clinical signs include, but are not limited to, depression, fever, respiratory distress, diarrhea, anorexia, incoordination, moving in small circles, yellow to clear discharge from the nose and eyes, and rusting on the nose, eyes, mouth or footpads. There is no treatment for sick animals except supportive care. Infected gray foxes may or may not survive the illness.

If you find a sick or injured fox:

- Please contact the nearest permitted rehabilitation facility. The closest facility for Siskiyou County is Shasta Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation, located in Anderson. Call (530) 365-9453 and leave a message on their hotline and the fox rehabilitator will get back to you promptly, usually within two hours.
- If human or animal safety is perceived to be at risk from a sick fox, call the California State Parks Northern Dispatch at (916) 358-1300 for CDFW assistance in humanely dispatching the animal.

f you are bitten or scratched by a fox:

- Call the County of Siskiyou Environmental Health Division at (530) 841-2100. Neurologic signs of CDV may not be distinguishable from rabies virus infection, which is a public health risk.

f you find a dead fox:

- Do not handle the carcass with bare hands. Follow CDFW's protocol for safe handling and carcass disposal (<http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/laboratories/wildlife-investigations/monitoring/protocols>).

DFW encourages the public to remove domestic pet food from outside their home (especially at night), and to not feed wildlife or allow them contact with domestic animals. Domestic dogs and cats should receive vaccinations for rabies, distemper and other common diseases as directed by a veterinarian.

For questions regarding distemper in wildlife or concerns about sick animals, contact CDFW's Wildlife Investigations Laboratory at (916) 358-2790 or CDFW Wildlife Biologist Christine Found-Jackson at (530) 841-2278.

Media Contacts:

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