On May 30, a dog in Dundy County tested positive for rabies. The dog was submitted by Dr. Steve Pollmann from the Southwestern Veterinary Services in Wauneta. Nebraska reported 35 cases of rabies last year. The listing of positive cases in Nebraska for 2011 can be found at http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/srd_rabies11.aspx. So far 25 cases have been confirmed in 2012, 17 skunks, 4 bats, 1 fox, 1 raccoon, 1 dog and 1 bovine.

The risk of exposure to rabies is real, but the disease is preventable in both humans and domestic animals. In the U.S., there are around 7,000 animal rabies cases diagnosed every year. In the midwest, skunks and bats are the main sources and the most common animal species positve for rabies.

Domestic pets and livestock can be infected from exposure to these wildlife sources of rabies. Rabies prevention consists of vaccinating domestic animals, education of humans to avoid exposures and providing exposed persons with prompt post-exposure rabies prophylaxis. The World Health Organization estimates approximately 70,000 people die of rabies infection world-wide each year.

Local health experts offer these tips to prevent rabies.

•Have your veteranarian vaccinate all dogs, cats, ferrets, horses and valuable livestock against rabies.

• If bitten by an animal, seek medical attention and report the bite to your local public health department immediately.

• If your animal is bitten, contact your veterinarian to have the animal examined.

• Do not handle or feed wild animals.

• If wild animals appear sick or injured, call animal control for assistance.

• Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.

Dr. Pollmann urges area residents to vaccinate all dogs and cats kept as pets. “Vaccinating pets helps protect pets and people,” says Pollmann.

The cost of vaccinating dogs or cats for rabies and other routine illnesses is $50 to $60 per year.