

Minnesota Department of Health Update

BOARD OF ANIMAL HEALTH MEETING, SEPTEMBER 2026

Rabies

- Currently in the peak season of responding to animal bites and rabies risk assessments. We are experiencing higher call volume, 43% increase in Jan – August 2026 call volume compared to same average timeframe from 2021-2025 and 30% increase from 2025 with subsequent increase in bat submissions for rabies testing.
 - Trend is also being seen nationally, and CDC issued a Health Alert highlighting the increase inquires and rabies vaccine administration.
<https://www.cdc.gov/han/php/notices/han00533.html>
- Investigating a business who may not have been consistently submitting animals for rabies testing. Asked customers of ASAP Wildlife Services MN to contact us to confirm testing.
 - Press release: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/news/pressrel/2026/rabies090826.html>
- CDC Rabies Branch has lost a significant number of staff due to staffing reductions and retirements.
- MDH and BAH collaborated with Departments of Ag and Health in IA, SD, NE and CDC to provide a regional summary outlining an increase in skunk rabies that has led to an increase in cattle rabies in the upper Midwest.
 - Link to notification:
<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNBAH/bulletins/41ca7be>
- MDH staff presented on a CDC Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) call on 4/30 that focused on national and state specific rabies surveillance and investigations.
 - Webinar and resources available here: [Rabies is Still Here: Epidemiology, Outbreaks, and Costs of Prevention in the United States | COCA | CDC](#)
- MDH and BAH staff also presented a rabies overview on the BAH Companion Animal Webinar series titled “(Don’t) Bite Me! Frequently Asked Questions About Rabies on June 10.
 - A recording of the webinar can be found here: [Don't Bite Me! Frequently Asked Questions About Rabies](#)

Brucella canis

- MDH and BAH work collaborate to investigate cases of canine brucellosis. *Brucella canis* can cause infections in both dogs and humans; however, routine human brucella testing does not identify *B. canis*. Blood culture is the only way to confirm a diagnosis in a person. MDH provides animal owners, veterinary staff and others exposed to positive dogs information on the zoonotic risk of *B. canis* and when to seek care.

- Rescue dogs have historically been overrepresented in reported *B. canis* infections and brucellosis should be considered in dogs that present with osteomyelitis and were obtained through a rescue organization.
- Enrolling exposed people in a CDC study to develop a serologic test for rough strains of *Brucella* (including *B. canis*).
- MVMA hosted a Hot Topics webinar on June 10 with BAH and MDH: [Adopt the Pug, Not the Bug: Protecting Minnesota's Dogs and Their Human Companions from Canine Brucellosis](#)

Tularemia

- 2026 is on pace for another record year for tularemia infections in both animals and people.
 - Thus far, 31 animal cases and 5 human cases have been reported.

H5

- Monitoring 24 responders and poultry workers associated with 3 positive flocks for symptoms. Offering antivirals and testing to anyone who had symptoms or breach in PPE.

New World Screwworm

- Continue to raise awareness with MN human clinicians, travelers and migrant/immigrant communities regarding the risk of NWS to travelers to endemic areas and infested areas in the U.S.
- Partnering with the BAH to develop communication materials and outreach to pet owners, foster-based rescues, travelers and migrant/immigrant communities as part of the USDA NWS Grand Challenge opportunities.

Hantavirus

- On May 2, the WHO confirmed an outbreak of Andes hantavirus associated with a Dutch cruise ship, M/V Hondius. 18 U.S. passengers were evacuated from the ship and sent to the National Quarantine Unit that is located in Omaha, Nebraska for 42 days following their last exposure to a positive case.
- Additional U.S. passengers who were potentially briefly exposed to infected passengers on a flight prior to the recognition of the outbreak were also monitored daily by state and local public health for 42 days.
 - Minnesota did have returning travelers who met this criteria and MDH Zoonotic Disease Staff were in contact with them daily until June 6.
- A total of 12 confirmed and 1 probable case were detected with 3 deaths. No infections were detected in U.S. residents.
 - The outbreak was officially declared over on July 2.