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FULTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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faxed 04/27/05. lh
Date: April 28, 2005
To: Area Media
From: Mary England, M.S., L.E.H.P, Administrator
Re: News Release For Immediate Release

HEALTH OFFICIALS ISSUE WARNING ABOUT RABID SKUNK

Local health officials are alerting local residents who live, work and recreate in rural areas where skunks can be found that the state has reported incidents of a rabid skunk and other animals this spring.

On April 20, 2005, the Illinois Department of Public Health laboratory in Springfield reported that a skunk trapped in LaSalle County tested rabies positive. The skunk was trapped for surveillance purposes by the United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services to assist in evaluating skunk rabies in the northwestern corner of LaSalle County. The animal was trapped on April 19 in Mendota (northwest LaSalle County). The skunk was subdued, had wounds and did not spray when the trap was moved. No human or animal exposures to rabies occurred as a result of this rabid animal.

This is the first skunk testing positive for rabies in Illinois since 1998. From January 1 to April 21, 2005, four animals have been identified with rabies in Illinois. These four animals include a cow from Bureau County that had been purchased from a LaSalle County location, two bats (one each from Hancock and Winnebago County) and this skunk trapped in LaSalle County.

The identification of a skunk with rabies in an area in LaSalle County close to where a horse in December 2004 and a cow in January 2005 tested positive is of great concern. Both the horse and cow tested positive for the north central skunk strain of rabies. The skunk brain tissue will be sent for strain typing.

To avoid exposure to rabies, citizens should avoid contact with wild, unfamiliar or stray animals and report animals that are acting abnormally to their local animal control. If bitten by an animal, citizens should report the bite to animal control and seek medical attention.

Local officials are recommending that pets and valuable livestock should be kept up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations.