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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT: Notice of Increase in Canine Distemper Cases**

An increase in the number of distemper cases in animals entering the facility has been recorded by staff of the Hobbs Animal Adoption Center (HAAC). The origin is known at this time. Canine distemper is spread through direct contact or airborne exposure, rather like the common cold in humans. Symptoms include pus-like discharge from the animal's eyes, fever, nasal discharge, coughing, lethargy, reduced appetite, and vomiting. When an infected dog or wild animal coughs, sneezes, or barks, they release aerosol droplets into the environment which may infect nearby animals and surfaces, such as food and water bowls. Proactive measures to prevent further spread of this disease is critical at this time to protect the animal population in our community.

In an attempt to control the spread of this serious disease in our animal population, the HAAC will begin the following temporary practices: 1) the stray drop pens at the facility will be locked until further notice to prevent a potentially infected animal from entering the facility and spreading this disease; 2) citizens who need to surrender a dog will need to provide proof of current vaccines or HAAC will vaccinate the animal and request the owner to take the pet back home for a 7-10 day period; 3) owner surrenders outside of Lea County or from areas that have a facility that holds stray/unwanted pets will not be accepted at this time; 4) owners who need to surrender an unwanted litter of puppies are requested to allow us to vaccinate the puppies then hold them at the individual's own residence for two weeks before returning them to HAAC. These measures will help to determine if this disease is from unvaccinated animals in the community. If a citizen finds a stray dog, they should leave the dog where they found it and notify Animal Control at (575)391-4178.

Linda Westall, DVM (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine), the contracted veterinarian of the City of Hobbs, stated, "Canine distemper is a highly contagious and severe disease. However, it is also entirely preventable with proper vaccination. Please protect your animals from this deadly, debilitating disease with a simple vaccination."

Be mindful in following the below tips from the HAAC staff and Dr. Westall to protect your and other pets from this diseases:

- Pet owners please microchip or put tags on your pets so that they do not have to enter the facility and potentially be exposed; Animal Control Officers will work diligently to return these animals to their owners and avoid the animal entering the facility and potentially being exposed

- Make sure your puppy gets the full series of distemper vaccinations
- Keep distemper vaccinations up-to-date throughout your dog's life and avoid any gaps in vaccinations
- Keep your dog away from infected animals and wildlife
- Vaccinate pet ferrets for distemper
- Be careful socializing your puppy or unvaccinated dog, especially in areas where dogs congregate, like dog parks, classes, and doggy daycare

By following these tips, you will protect your pet as well as others from contracting this life-threatening disease. If you have further questions, please contact your veterinarian and call your veterinarian immediately if your dog begins showing signs of distemper.

To contact Hobbs Animal Control, call (575)391-4178.

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