



City of Hobbs Contact:
Meghan Mooney, Dir. of Communications
575-391-4169
mmooney@hobbsnm.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Canine Distemper Continues to Spread in Hobbs

On March 10, 2022, the City of Hobbs issued a public service announcement regarding an outbreak of canine distemper at the Hobbs Animal Adoption Center (HAAC). As a result of the outbreak, staff in conjunction with the City of Hobbs' contract veterinarian Dr. Linda Westall, DVM, worked tirelessly to try to rid the facility of the disease. Unfortunately, despite staffs' valiant efforts, the rate of infections has not subsided and has increased dramatically.

City of Hobbs administration has met with HAAC staff and Dr. Westall regarding best practices in responding to the current outbreak. Importantly, Dr. Westall has been in contact with the New Mexico Office of the State Veterinarian to develop an appropriate response. As a result of those conversations, the City of Hobbs has developed the following immediate response:

- The City has closed the HAAC for the next 7-10 calendar days. The public will be notified upon reopening of the HAAC;
- All low-cost surgeries and vaccinations will be suspended until further notice;
- A thorough cleaning and sanitizing of the HAAC will be conducted;
- The City will conduct blood tests on all canines currently housed at the HAAC;
- The City will isolate any canine that has been potentially exposed to distemper but whose blood tests are negative for distemper;
- The City will continuously monitor and retest any canine that has been placed in isolation;
- In order to mitigate the harm to the public and any potentially exposed canines, the City will be forced to humanely euthanize those canines whose blood tests are positive for distemper.

Unfortunately, canine distemper cannot be cured. The canine may recover; however, the animal will have lasting neurological effects its entire life. Some of the symptoms of canine distemper can included but are not limited to: pus-like discharge from the eyes; fever; nasal discharge; coughing; lethargy; reduced appetite; and vomiting. As the virus attacks the nervous system, infected canines develop circling behavior, head tilt, muscle twitches, convulsions with jaw chewing movements and salivation ("chewing gum fits"), seizures, and partial or complete paralysis. Distemper can be spread easily by an airborne exposure (through sneezing or coughing) to the virus from an infected canine. The virus can also be transmitted by shared food and water bowls and equipment. Infected canines can shed the virus for months.

City of Hobbs City Manager Manny Gomez states, "This is a very unfortunate turn of events for the Hobbs Animal Adoption Center. Having overseen the facility at a certain point in my career, I know that the team of employees that work there develop bonds with the animals. This decision was extremely difficult but we must act to protect the public and prevent the inhumane suffering of those canines infected. My hope is residents of Hobbs will have confidence that we have consulted the necessary experts in the field and have exhausted all possible remedies prior to taking these necessary steps."

The City of Hobbs urges all dog owners to please have your dogs vaccinated for canine distemper. This disease is almost completely preventable through vaccinations. The City also urges all pet owners to contact their veterinarian immediately if their dog begins to show signs of distemper.

Local animal control partners (Lea County, City of Eunice, and City of Lovington) have been notified of the City of Hobbs' immediate response measures. If you or someone you know finds a stray dog, please leave the dog where it is and contact the City of Hobbs Animal Protection Department at (575) 391-4178.

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