

# NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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## **RABIES FOUND IN SABINO CANYON FOXES Visitors Should Avoid and Report Mammals That Exhibit “Unusual” Behavior**

TUCSON, AZ (January 22, 2004)— The carcasses of two gray foxes found in the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area this past week both tested positive for rabies, according to Josh Taiz, District Biologist, Santa Catalina Ranger District. The dead animals were found in the areas above Sabino Dam and in nearby Bear Canyon near Shuttle Stop 3.

“We have had at least two incidents of foxes attacking people in the canyon within the past few weeks,” said Taiz. “This type of aggressive behavior usually precedes death in these normally shy animals.”

Testing conducted at the University of Arizona’s Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory confirmed the presence of the rabies virus in the dead foxes.

In neither case did the foxes’ attacks break the skin of the victims, exposing them to the rabid animals’ saliva. However, it is possible for humans to contract rabies if infectious material such as saliva comes in direct contact with eyes, nose, mouth or a wound. In no case should people attempt to touch the animal or handle the carcass.

Visitors should report dead mammal carcasses and unusual mammal behavior immediately to the Santa Catalina Ranger District office at (520) 403-8277 or the Arizona Game and Fish Department at (520) 628-5376. Please include:

- Geographic location of the incident (or carcass)
- Type of animal that was involved (mammals only; no birds, fish or reptiles)
- Date and time of sighting
- How the exposure occurred (provoked or unprovoked)

People involved in attacks where the skin has been broken and exposed to animal saliva should wash the wound within five minutes of exposure with soap and water, then seek immediate medical attention.

Taiz said that rabid animals sometimes attack family pets and advised people who live in neighborhoods adjacent to Sabino Canyon not to handle, feed or intentionally attract wild animals with open garbage or litter, or attempt to nurse sick animals back to health. Children should be taught never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.

Wild mammals typically avoid human contact and are most active during dawn, dusk and evening hours when humans are less likely to be present.