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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Identification of *Baylisascaris* (Raccoon Roundworm) in Clark County

District issues reminder that raccoons can transmit disease and should not be adopted as pets

(Las Vegas, Nev., - July 8, 2005) – The Clark County Health District has received confirmation from the Nevada Department of Agriculture Animal Disease laboratory that several area raccoons have tested positive for *Baylisascaris* (raccoon roundworm disease). The testing was conducted as part of a collaborative infectious disease surveillance effort with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Baylisascaris is a potentially dangerous parasite commonly found in raccoons. The worms develop to maturity in the small intestine, where they produce millions of eggs that are shed in raccoon droppings. Human infection is relatively rare, but occurs when people inadvertently ingest infective roundworm eggs in soil, water or other contaminated objects. If large numbers of eggs are ingested, severe central nervous system damage, eye damage or death can result.

To prevent *Baylisascaris* infection, do not adopt raccoons as pets. Additionally, avoid contact with raccoons and their droppings, which are typically found at the base of trees and on raised horizontal surfaces like fallen logs, stumps and large rocks. Further, discourage raccoons from visiting your home by eliminating access to food and water sources like pet food, garbage cans and bird feeders.

To eliminate eggs, raccoon droppings and material contaminated with raccoon droppings should be removed carefully and burned, buried or sent to a landfill. Prompt removal of raccoon feces will reduce the risk for exposure and possible infection.

To learn more about *Baylisascaris*, visit <http://www.cchd.org> or contact the Clark County Health District Division of Environmental Health at (702) 759-0677.

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