

Arizona Town to Quarantine Pet Cats

The city of Flagstaffs 40-day feline quarantine, which begins April 17, will be the third in six years.

In an effort to control a rabies outbreak that's spread for years within the local wild skunk population, officials in Flagstaff, Ariz., are asking cat owners to keep their cats indoors for several weeks beginning later this month.

The 40-day quarantine begins April 17 and is the third quarantine in six years for the city, which has tried to inoculate skunks more than once. In 2001, a trap, inoculate and release program was undertaken and appeared to stop the spread, according to the Coconino County Health Department. However, there was no concrete proof of this.

Last year, there was a 60-day cat quarantine as health officials tried to inoculate the skunks by spreading packets of oral rabies vaccine, but again, there's no evidence it was effective.

Officials now say that rabies may have become permanently established in the wild animal population; however the number of reported rabies cases has declined since 2001.

Despite the quarantine however, no rabid skunks have been found this year. Five rabid skunks were found in the Flagstaff area between Sept. 1, 2004 and March 5, 2005.

Pet owners are asked not to leave pet food outside after sundown during the quarantine period. Posted: April 7, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST