

# Gator needs new home

WATERLOO, Iowa (AP) — Animal control officials in Iowa are seeking a new home for a baby alligator named Chompey. A resident of the eastern Iowa city of about 68,000 people bought the alligator after spotting an online advertisement, but he later learned state law does not allow people to keep alligators or other exotic animals, the *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier* reported (bit.ly/J7S-Vtu) Monday.

He turned the gator in to animal control officials, who kept the creature in an aquarium while figuring out what to do with it. Then the gator started snapping and making noises.

“He was really kind of cute, but he was also kind of naughty,” said Maria Tiller, Waterloo’s code enforcement forewoman. “I didn’t want him in my office anymore.”

The alligator was moved to a veterinary center, where staffed dubbed the animal “Chompey.”

Now he is at a herpetologist in Des Moines, where the animal’s being held in quarantine while staff seek a home for him.

Josh Colvin, who heads animal control for Animal Rescue of Iowa, said alligator reports have dropped since the state banned exotic animals in 2007.

“They just don’t realize they are going to grow up and get big,” Colvin said.

# Kansans of all ages should get flu vaccine

With flu activity increasing and family and friends gathering for the holidays, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment urges all Kansans to receive an annual flu vaccination to protect themselves and their loved ones.

National Influenza Vaccination Week this week serves as a reminder that all of us have a responsibility to prevent the spread of influenza. Kansas has identified two different types of influenza viruses currently circulating, and, based on data from the Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network, flu activity is currently low within the state. However, flu activity usually increases at this time of year, peaks in January or February, and can last as late as May.

On average, five to 20 percent of the U.S. population contracts the flu yearly, and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized with flu complications. Influenza or pneumonia contributed to or was the direct cause of 1,444 deaths among Kansas residents during the 2012-2013 influenza season. Influenza and pneumonia was the eighth leading cause of death in 2012 in Kansas.

“Flu season is here and before it becomes widespread, take the opportunity to get your vaccine now,” said Robert Moser, state health officer. “Getting a flu vaccination is also a great way to protect those who are at high risk.”

Avoid spreading the flu virus by covering coughs and sneezes, washing your hands, and staying

home when you are sick. Nearly all persons six months and older are recommended to receive a flu vaccine every year. Vaccination is especially important for protecting those at high risk for serious flu complications, including young children, pregnant women, adults 65 years and older, and anyone with chronic health conditions like asthma, heart disease and diabetes. Those in contact with an infant less than 6 months old should also be immunized. At this age, babies are too young to be vaccinated and are more vulnerable to complications.

Symptoms of the flu include: fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough and muscle aches. Complications can include pneumonia, ear and sinus infections and dehydration; the flu might also worsen other chronic conditions.

It’s not too late to vaccinate. To get your flu vaccine, contact your health care provider or the local health department. Go to [www.kdheks.gov/flu](http://www.kdheks.gov/flu) for more flu facts.



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