

Dec. 6, 2018

DOH-BAY ISSUES RABIES ALERT FOR FOUNTAIN

Alert issued after two rabid raccoons attack pets in a one-week time frame.



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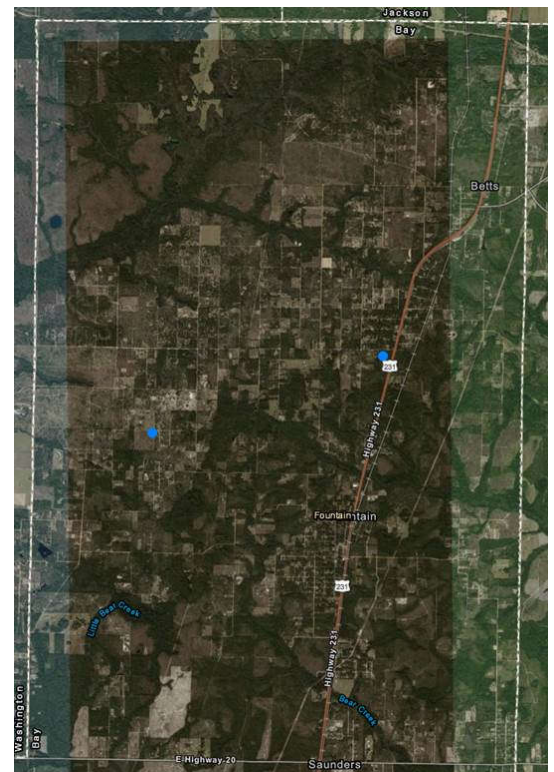
Panama City, Fla.—The Florida Department of Health in Bay County is issuing a rabies alert. The rabies alert is for 60 days and includes the area north of Highway 20 in Fountain. This follows two raccoons testing positive for rabies in the area within a week of each other. On December 5, a raccoon tested positive for rabies after killing a cat near the intersection of Highway 231 and Owenwood Road. On November 28, a raccoon with rabies attacked a dog near the intersection of Western Road and Westchester Drive.

After Hurricane Michael pets and wild animals may be displaced, increasing the potential likelihood of contact with people and other animals. These two new cases bring Bay County's total rabies cases for 2018 to eight. Rabies is a **fatal** viral infection of the nervous system that is transmitted from **animal to animal or animal to human** by bite, scratch, or mucous membrane exposure to infected saliva.

Florida law requires dogs and cats four months or older be vaccinated by a licensed veterinarian against rabies. Although some veterinarian offices remain closed after the storm, many vets are reopened. Bay County Animal Services will be offering free rabies vaccinations through their partner VIP Petcare. The event will be held on December 12 from 4 – 7 pm at Bay County Animal Services, 6401 Bay Line Drive, Panama City. If you have any questions, call 850-767-3333.

To avoid being bitten by an animal:

- Feed your pets inside and keep garbage covered. Even unintentional feeding of raccoons is illegal in Florida.
- Do not approach stray pets or wildlife.
- Do not feed or attempt to pet or handle stray pets or wildlife.



- Do not disturb an animal that is sleeping, eating or caring for its young.
- If a strange animal walks toward you, stay calm and slowly move away.
- Report stray dogs to local authorities such as animal control.

If you are bitten by an animal and emergency help is needed, call 911.

- Take care of the bite wound:
 - Before treating the wound, wash your hands with soap and clean fresh water.
 - Remove any item that is in the way of caring for the wound.
 - Put pressure on the wound with a clean cloth to stop bleeding.
 - After the bleeding has stopped, pour bottled or clean running water over the wound.
 - Gently clean around the wound with soap and clean water.
 - Pat dry and use an adhesive bandage or dry clean cloth to cover the wound.
 - Leave unclean wounds open.

Report the bite to your local animal control agency if they are open. Tell the animal control official everything you know about the animal and where it went. Bay County Animal Services can be reached at 850-767-3333. In Lynn Haven, call the Lynn Haven Police Department at 850-265-1112. Tell the animal control official everything you know about the animal and where it went. Also report the injury to the Florida Department of Health in Bay County at 850-872-4455. Follow up. Rabies is preventable when treatment is provided in a timely manner.

If your pet(s) gets into a fight with a wild animal:

- Contact DOH-Bay at 850-872-4455
- The wild animal will need to be tested for rabies.
- Your animal may need to be quarantined.
- Do not shoot the suspected rabid animal(s) in the head.

For further information on rabies, go to the Florida Department of Health website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/medicine/rabies/rabies-index.html> or contact the Florida Department of Health in Bay County at 850-872-4720 or follow us on Twitter @FLHealthEmerald.

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