

March 14, 2019

RABIES ALERT EXPANDED TO ALL OF BAY COUNTY

Bay County has confirmed it's fourth rabid animal for 2019.



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Panama City, Fla.—The Florida Department of Health in Bay County is expanding a rabies alert issued earlier in March. Now that there are four confirmed cases of rabies within a month period, the alert covers all of Bay County. The rabies alert is for 60 days. 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.

The recent case involved a rabid raccoon that was killed by dogs off Oakenshaw Drive between Highway 2301 and Camp Flowers Road in Youngstown. Another raccoon was also killed by a dog in Callaway on Sukoshi Drive off Highway 22 in February. The original rabies alert sent earlier in March was only for a portion of northern Bay County. Two gray foxes tested positive for rabies in that area, one off the north end of Resota Beach Road and the other off Proper Road east of Lake Merial.

Florida law requires dogs and cats four months or older be vaccinated by a licensed veterinarian against rabies. Unvaccinated dogs and cats should be kept indoors. Cats are the domestic animal most likely to be infected with rabies. Keep cats indoors. Do not touch wild animals or stray cats or dogs. No animal is too young to have rabies.

Operation Spay Bay will be offering free rabies vaccinations for cats and dogs on Saturday, March 16 from 9 am – 1 pm at Sharon Sheffield Park, 901 Ohio Avenue, Lynn Haven. Operation Spay Bay will also offer other shots and testing a low cost. This includes; distemper for \$10, kennel cough for \$10, heartworm test for \$10 and FVRCP for \$10. For more information call 850-215-1022 or email operationspaybay@gmail.com.

The Florida Department of Health would like to remind citizens that it is unintentionally or unintentionally feeding raccoons is prohibited in Florida. Feed dogs and cats indoors and keep garbage covered. Feeding raccoons concentrates raccoons at abnormally high densities and increases the likelihood of rabies transmission from raccoon-to-raccoon and raccoon-to-dogs, cats, and people. Infected raccoons may appear normal. Relocating an infected raccoon can spread rabies.

If bitten or scratched by an animal, wash the wound immediately with soap and water. Seek medical treatment as needed and report the injury to the Florida Department of Health in Bay County at (850) 872-4455. If the animal is stray or wild, call 911 or Bay County Animal Services at (850) 767-3333 and report the animal's location. In the City of Lynn Haven, call the Lynn Haven Police Department at (850) 265-1112. Follow up. Rabies is preventable when treatment is provided in a timely manner.

The following advice is issued:

- If your dog or cat fights with a wild animal, contact the Florida Department of Health in Bay County immediately. The wild animal will need to be tested for rabies. Your animal may need to be quarantined. Do not shoot suspected rabid animals in the head.
- **Do not touch animals that are not yours.** Avoid contact with **all** wildlife, especially raccoons, bats, bobcats, otters, foxes, skunks and coyotes. No animal is too young to have rabies. A rabid animal may act friendly.
 - Wear rubber gloves and protective eyewear when dressing/butchering wild animals to avoid exposure to rabies and other diseases.
 - Cook all meat thoroughly to 165 degrees.
 - Do not hunt animals that appear sick.
- For general questions pertaining to stray animals or odd acting wild animals, contact your area's animal control department.
- For questions regarding the health of a pet, contact a veterinarian.
- Teach your children about rabies and to **NEVER TOUCH A BAT!**

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.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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