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RABID FOX KILLED IN FOUNTAIN

Rabies Alert Extended After Seventh Rabid Animal Identified in Bay County Since January



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Panama City, Fla.—A Gray Fox killed along Evergreen Street in Fountain has tested positive for rabies. 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.

Seven animals have tested positive for rabies in Bay County this year. **The existing county-wide rabies alert is extended for another 60 days.** In April, a rabid raccoon was killed near Laird Street and Laurie Avenue in Panama City Beach. In March, rabid raccoons were captured and killed in the Cedar Grove area of Panama City and off Oakenshaw Drive in Youngstown. In February and March, rabid Gray Foxes were killed in the Lake Merial and north Resota Beach Road areas. In February, a rabid raccoon was killed along Sukoshi Drive in Callaway.

If you own a dog or cat over four months of age, it must be vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian. **Unvaccinated dogs and cats must be kept indoors. It is cruel to put an unvaccinated dog or cat outdoors unprotected against this deadly disease.** An unvaccinated dog or cat can be a channel through which rabies enters a household. If you give the vaccine yourself and you are not a licensed veterinarian, it doesn't count and your animal is considered unvaccinated.

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. Never touch a bat!

The Florida Department of Health would like to remind citizens that intentionally 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

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