

February 7, 2018

Rabid Raccoon Captured in the “Cove”

Contact: Heather Kretzer
Heather.Kretzer@flhealth.gov
850-252-9670



Bay County – A raccoon captured in the area between Merriam Cherry Street Elementary School and Holy Nativity Episcopal Church in the City of Panama City has tested positive for rabies. This is Bay County’s first laboratory confirmed rabid animal of 2018. In 2017, two Panama City Beach raccoons and a Panama City kitten tested positive for rabies.

The Florida Department of Health in Bay County would like to remind citizens that Florida Law requires all dogs and cats over four months of age to be vaccinated for rabies by a licensed veterinarian. Dogs and cats are at risk for rabies should they fight with an infected animal or chew up a bat. Unvaccinated animals should not be outside unsupervised. Ideally, cats should be maintained inside people's homes. Allowing cats to roam free is not in the best interests of the community’s health.

To avoid attracting wildlife, feed dogs and cats indoors. **Placing or offering food or garbage in such a manner that it attracts raccoons is illegal in Florida.**

Rabies is a fatal viral infection of the nervous system that is transmitted from animal to animal and animal to human by bite, scratch, or mucous membrane exposure to infected saliva. **Humans should avoid physical contact with wild animals and stray or unvaccinated domestic animals.** Teach your children to **NEVER TOUCH A BAT!**

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:

- Secure outside garbage in covered containers to avoid attracting wild animals.
- Do not leave pet food outside overnight as this attracts wild animals to your home and increases the chance of a pet-raccoon conflict.
- 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.
- 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: website <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.

###