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RABID RACCOON KILLED IN THE COOK BAYOU AREA



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Panama City, Fla.—An aggressive raccoon killed in the neighborhood on the north side of the Cook Bayou Bridge in unincorporated Bay County is rabies positive. 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 or tissues.

Eleven animals have tested positive for rabies in Bay County this year. In August, a rabid raccoon was found dead in a swimming pool in the North Lagoon Drive area of Panama City Beach. In July, a rabid bat was found on Panama City Beach. Rabid animals have also been found in Fountain, Youngstown, Cedar Grove, Callaway, and Southport in 2019.

If you own a dog or cat over four months of age, it must be vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian. If you give the vaccine yourself and you are not a licensed veterinarian, it doesn't count and your animal is considered unvaccinated. Dogs and cats are not recognized as vaccinated until 28 days have passed from their initial vaccination. **Unvaccinated dogs and cats should not be outdoors.**

Cats are reported with rabies more frequently than dogs in Florida. 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 in Bay County (DOH-Bay) 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. Rabid raccoons may appear normal or seem tame. Do not relocate trapped raccoons. 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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