

January 27, 2016

## KITTEN TESTS POSTIVE FOR RABIES IN BAY COUNTY

*Second cat to test positive for rabies in Bay County in recent months*



**Contact:**

Heather Kretzer

[Heather.Kretzer@FLHealth.gov](mailto:Heather.Kretzer@FLHealth.gov)

850-527-8715

**PANAMA CITY** – A three-month old kitten has tested positive for rabies in Bay County. The kitten was found on the 1200 Block of West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street in Panama City a month ago and was likely exposed to rabies in that area. Other cats in that area may have been exposed to rabies.



The kitten has been confined at a private animal rescue operation in Southport, Florida since the end of December 2016. **Persons bitten or scratched by this kitten at the rescue operation should contact the Florida Department of Health in Bay County at (850) 872-4455.** Report animal bites and scratches to the Florida Department of Health in Bay County at (850) 872-4455.

This is Bay County's first laboratory confirmed rabid animal of 2017. An adult cat from the Coronado Place area of Panama City Beach tested positive for rabies in November of 2016.

The Florida Department of Health would like to remind citizens that no animal is too young to have rabies. Avoid contact with wild animals and stray or unvaccinated outdoor dogs and cats or as they can carry diseases which can infect humans, including rabies. Florida Law requires all dogs, cats, and ferrets over four months of age to be vaccinated for rabies by a **licensed veterinarian**. An animal is considered **unvaccinated** if the vaccination has expired or it was not given by a licensed veterinarian. The first rabies vaccination an animal receives is only good for one year. **Unvaccinated pets should never be outside without direct and continuous adult supervision.**

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is **fatal to warm blooded animals and humans**. The rabies virus is secreted in the saliva of an infected animal or human. The virus can also be found in nervous system tissues. Exposure to the virus can be through broken skin (bites, scratches) or mucous membrane (eyes, nose, mouth) contact with infected saliva or tissues. Rabies in humans can be prevented if rabies medication is received in a timely manner following an exposure. Rabies is fatal after symptoms are present.

To minimize the chance of a wild animal-pet conflict, dogs and cats should be fed indoors. If they are fed outdoors, food should only be left outside for a short period of time and then removed. Any spilled food should be cleaned up. Pet food left outdoors and uncovered garbage will attract wild animals to your yard. **Placing or offering food or garbage in such a manner that it attracts raccoons is illegal in Florida.**

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 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, X1125. **If the animal is stray or wild**, call 911 or Bay County Animal Control 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.
- 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, option 1.

### **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.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit [www.FloridaHealth.gov](http://www.FloridaHealth.gov).