

NOVEMBER 15, 2016

RABIES ALERT ISSUED FOR PART OF BAY COUNTY

Pet owners urged to vaccinate their animals against rabies, be on alert for animals with rabies



Contact:

Heather Kretzer

Heather.Kretzer@flhealth.gov

850-872-4455, ext. 1344

PANAMA CITY, Fla.- The Florida Department of Health in Bay County has issued a rabies alert for Laguna Beach neighborhoods in unincorporated Bay County west of the City of Panama City Beach. This is in response to a free-roaming domestic cat that tested positive for rabies on November 15, 2016.



All citizens in Bay County should be aware that rabies is present in the wild animal population and domestic animals are at risk if not vaccinated. The public is asked to maintain a heightened awareness that rabies is active in Bay County. Alerts are designed to increase awareness to the public, but they should not give a false sense of security to areas that have not been named as under an alert.

The rabies alert is for 60 days. The center of the alert includes areas in and adjacent to the eastern Laguna Beach area of unincorporated Bay County, west of City of Panama City Beach. The rabies alert includes the following area boundaries in Bay County:

The rabies alert is for 60 days. The center of the alert includes areas in and adjacent to the eastern Laguna Beach area of unincorporated Bay County, west of City of Panama City Beach. The rabies alert includes the following area boundaries in Bay County:

- West of South Wells Street
- North of the Gulf of Mexico to timberland
- East of Malaga Place

An animal with rabies could infect humans by bite or claw scratch and other domestic or wild animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies. All domestic animals should be vaccinated against rabies and all wildlife contact should be avoided, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats and coyotes. Dogs and cats without a current veterinarian administered rabies vaccination should not be outdoors without constant and direct adult supervision.

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans. The only treatment for human exposure to rabies is rabies specific immune globulin and rabies immunization. Appropriate treatment started soon after the exposure, will protect an exposed person from the disease.

The following advice is issued:

- 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.
- 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 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, X1125.

About the Florida Department of Health

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