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Governor

H. Frank Farmer, Jr., M.D., Ph.D.
State Surgeon General

September 27th, 2011 Reminder of Awareness Day
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COLLIER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RECOGNIZES SEPTEMBER 28TH AS WORLD RABIES DAY

Collier—The Collier County Health Department (CCHD) promotes rabies awareness, education, and prevention by celebrating World Rabies Day on September 28, 2011. From 2008-2010 the Collier County Health Department investigated an average of 52 cases per year where an animal bit a human and post-exposure (after the bite) rabies treatment was recommended to prevent rabies transmission. Collier County health officials remind residents that rabies prevention begins at home. World Rabies Day provides an opportunity to increase awareness of a serious disease that affects humans and animals. Preventing rabies is as simple as ensuring adequate vaccination of pets and farm animals, avoiding contact with wild animals, and educating those at risk.

The worldwide campaign aims to raise awareness and resources to enhance prevention and control of rabies, with the overall vision of successful human rabies prevention and elimination of dog-to-dog transmission of rabies. Founded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Alliance for Rabies Control, a United Kingdom charity, the World Rabies Day initiative aims to bring together relevant partners in an effort to address rabies prevention and control.

Rabies is caused by a virus that people and other mammals can get through certain exposures to the saliva or nervous tissue from a rabid animal and is nearly always fatal without proper post-exposure treatment. When an animal is infected with rabies, the virus is shed in the saliva and can be passed to another animal or a person, usually through a bite. Transmission may also occur if this saliva or the animal's nervous tissue enters open wounds, the mouth, nose or eyes of another animal or person.

Thirty-two counties in Florida have reported 61 animal rabies cases during the period January 1, 2011-July 31, 2011. Raccoons account for 43 of the 61 cases. Unvaccinated outdoor cats are the domestic animal particularly at risk for developing rabies in Florida. Because of good animal vaccination programs and human post-exposure treatment, rabies is an uncommon human disease in the U.S. Typically 1-3 cases of human rabies are reported per year in the U.S. During 2009 four human rabies cases from the U.S. and Puerto Rico were reported to the CDC.

If your pet, farm animal, or any wild animal bites you or someone, you should wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water for at least 5 minutes, contact your physician immediately, and report the bite to the local health department and/or local animal control services. If your pet or farm animal is bitten by another animal, you should contact local animal control services, and your veterinarian immediately and have him/her examine your pet and assess your pet's vaccination needs.

CCHD promotes, protects and improves the health of all people in Collier County. Please protect your family and join the Collier County Health Department and other community agencies in raising awareness about this serious disease, and the methods for preventing it. For more information about rabies and World Rabies Day, please visit www.worldrabiesday.org or http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/medicine/rabies/World_Rabies_Day.html

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