



Rick Scott
Governor

Frank Farmer, Jr., M.D., PH.D
State Surgeon General.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 28, 2011

CONTACT: Crystal Steele
(850) 892 - 8021

Walton County Health Department Urges Rabies Awareness
--Rabies is preventable, but not curable--

Walton County - Walton County health officials urge residents to avoid contact with wild and stray animals to protect themselves from the risk of rabies exposure. A raccoon that fought with a dog in the Red Bay area has tested positive for rabies. This is the second rabies case recorded this year in Walton County. In June, a fox tested positive in the Grayton Beach area.

"Rabies is a potentially fatal disease. It is important not to handle wild animals, to be aware of unusual acting animals, and to keep pets vaccinated against rabies," Holly Holt, Interim Administrator, Walton County Health Department said.

Rabies is a deadly viral disease that can be prevented but not cured. The virus is spread through saliva and can be passed to another animal or person, usually through a bite. Infection may also occur if the saliva enters open wounds, the mouth, or eyes of another animal or person.

Walton County Health Department works with the Walton County Animal Control in responding to incidents of animal bites, tests animals for rabies through the Department of Health state laboratory, and quarantines animals as necessary. Walton County Health Department also provides rabies vaccinations to victims of animal bites.

The following are steps you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones against rabies:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up-to-date for all pets.
- Keep your pets under direct supervision so they are not exposed to wild animals. If a wild animal bites your pet, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact the Walton County Health Department at (850) 892-8021, or Walton County Animal Control at (850) 892-8682.
- Call your local animal control agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood.
- Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.
- Do not handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into you home.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas, where they might come in contact with people and pets.

Report unusual acting animals to the Walton County Animal Control at (850) 892-8682. Anyone who is bitten or scratched by wild or stray animals should report the incident to their doctor immediately, as well as their local health department. The contact number to report an animal bite to the Walton County Health Department is (850) 892-8021.

For more information, visit the DOH website at www.doh.state.fl.us or the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies.

###