

July 8, 2020

## RABIES ALERT ISSUED FOR SANTA ROSA COUNTY



**Contact:**

Debbie Stilphen, PIO  
PIO.CHD57@flhealth.gov  
850-564-2275

**Milton, FL** - The Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County (DOH-Santa Rosa) has issued a rabies alert for all of Santa Rosa County. The alert is in response to a report of a positive test result for rabies in a fox on July 7, 2020. The rabies alert will be in effect for the next 60 days.

An animal with rabies may appear sick or lethargic, have problems swallowing, or drool or salivate excessively. A wild animal may appear tamer than usual and some animals may have no visible symptoms.

All residents and visitors in Santa Rosa County should be aware that rabies is present in the wild animal population and domestic animals are at risk if not vaccinated. 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.

An animal with rabies could infect other wild or domestic animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies. All domestic animals should be vaccinated against rabies and all contact with wildlife should be avoided, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats and coyotes. 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.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- Keep pets under direct supervision so they do not come into contact with wild animals.
- Vaccinate pets against rabies and keep their vaccinations up to date.
- If a pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact Santa Rosa County Animal Services at 850-983-4680.
- Call animal control services to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood.
- Bring in pet food at night and secure trash cans with fasteners, or place trash containers in the garage so they do not attract wild or stray animals.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your 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.

- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and report the injury to the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County at 850-983-5200.

For further information on rabies, go to <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html> or call the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County at 850-983-5200, or Santa Rosa County Animal Services at 850-983-4680.

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