

Dec. 29, 2015

HEALTH OFFICIALS ISSUE RABIES ALERT



Contact:

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Milton, FL – The Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County has issued a rabies alert for Bell Lane in Pace. This is in response to a raccoon that tested positive for rabies after fighting with a dog on Dec. 22. The rabies alert will be in effect for the next 60 days. Because rabies can spread easily among wild animals, the risk of exposure cannot be confined to a single area. All residents should take precautions to avoid contact with wild animals or unfamiliar domestic animals.

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. The public is asked to maintain a heightened awareness that rabies is active in Santa Rosa County. Alerts are designed to increase awareness to the public, but they should not get a false sense of security in 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 wildlife contact 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 rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- Keep your pets under direct supervision so they do not come in contact with wild animals. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County at 850-983-5200, ext. 105.
- Call your local animal control agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood.
- **Do not** handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- **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, ext. 140.

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 Animal Services at 850-983-4680.

The Department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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About the Florida Department of Health

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