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## RABIES ALERT STILL IN EFFECT FOR SANTA ROSA COUNTY



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**Milton, Fla.-** The Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County would like to remind residents that a rabies alert is currently in effect for the Navarre area after another report of possible rabies in a kitten. The kitten died after developing neurologic symptoms; however, rabies could not be confirmed because the brain was not suitable for testing. As a precaution, three Navarre residents who were exposed to the kitten are receiving post exposure rabies vaccine. The rabies alert will be in effect until August 5.

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 give a false sense of security to areas that have not been named as under an alert.

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.

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:

- Vaccinate pets against rabies and keep vaccinations up to date.
- Keep pets under direct supervision so they do not come in contact with wild animals. 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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