

October 7, 2015

## SANTA ROSA COUNTY DRIVE THROUGH RABIES VACCINATION CLINIC



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**Milton, FL** – The Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County (DOH-Santa Rosa) and Santa Rosa Animal Control will host a drive-through rabies vaccination clinic for dogs and cats, Friday, October 23. The clinic will take place from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Animal Services facility, 4451 Pine Forest Road in Milton.

Local veterinarians have volunteered to provide the vaccine and administer the injections for a \$10.00 fee. Cash and checks will be accepted. A valid driver's license will be required for all checks. A certificate of vaccination and rabies tag will be provided. No other services will be available. Pets must be secured in a vehicle, crate or on leash.

“Once again we are happy to be able to partner with Animal Control and the local veterinarians to provide this service,” said Sandra L. Park-O’Hara, ARNP, administrator of the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County. “These clinics are always well attended. Typically, the veterinarians and their staff will vaccinate 200 to 300 dogs and cats. It’s a very worthwhile effort.”

Rabies is a disease that affects the brain. The virus is carried in the saliva of infected animals and is usually transmitted to people and other animals through a bite or scratch. In the U.S., more than 90 percent of rabies cases occur in wild animals, such as raccoons, foxes, skunks and bats, but domesticated animals can carry it as well.

An animal suffering from rabies may appear sick or lethargic, have problems swallowing, or drool or salivate excessively. A wild animal may appear tamer than usual and try to approach people. Some animals may have no visible symptoms at all. Even baby animals can carry rabies. That is why it is important to avoid contact with not only adult animals, but baby animals as well, no matter how cute they may be. Rabies is fatal to humans and animals, but rabies in humans can be prevented if rabies vaccine is administered as soon as possible after exposure. The best and easiest way to prevent pets from contracting rabies is by getting them a rabies shot.

Treating individuals that have been exposed to rabies can be expensive, and insurance does not always cover the cost. Those seeking post exposure treatment are usually seen first in a hospital emergency room to begin the shots, and may receive the rest of

the series at the health department. So far in 2015, DOH-Santa Rosa has provided post exposure rabies shots to 19 people, at a cost of over \$15,000.

The Department of Health advises the public to take these precautions to avoid exposing themselves or their pets to rabies:

- Avoid all contact with wild and unfamiliar domesticated animals, both adult and young. Never attempt to pick up or pet a wild or unfamiliar animal.
- Do not place feeders in the yard – food will attract unwanted animals such as raccoons and foxes.
- Do not leave pets outside unsupervised.
- Bring in pet food at night and secure trash cans with fasteners.
- Cover bird feeders. Most squirrel-proof coverings also deter wild animals.
- Children should never chase or attempt to catch or touch a wild or unfamiliar animal, and should tell an adult if a wild or strange animal tries to approach them.
- **Vaccinate pets against rabies and keep their vaccinations up to date.** Follow your veterinarian's recommendation for revaccination.

If bitten or scratched by a wild animal, or stray domesticated animal, wash the wound immediately with soap and water. This is the first line of defense against rabies! Seek medical attention immediately and report the incident to Santa Rosa Animal Control at 983-5680, or the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County at 983-5200.

For more information on the drive-through clinic, contact Mary Beverly, epidemiologist with DOH-Santa Rosa at (850) 983-5200.

For more information about rabies, visit our website at <http://santarosa.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/environmental-health/rabies-surveillance/index.html> or the Centers for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>.

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