



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Rabid raccoon in Baldwin County prompts reminders to immunize pets

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The diagnosis of a rabid raccoon in the Silverhill area in Baldwin County has prompted public officials to encourage pet owners to be sure their dogs, cats and ferrets are vaccinated against the fatal disease. Charlotte Plumb, environmental supervisor with the Baldwin County Health Department, said, "We strongly caution people not to approach stray animals, wildlife and bats."

Rabies is a disease of all mammals, including man, and is fatal if specialized anti-rabies treatment is not obtained immediately. The primary means of exposure is through a bite or scratch with contaminated saliva contacting the wound. Transmission of the deadly virus also occurs if saliva contacts a mucous membrane such as the eye or mouth.

The most consistent clinical sign of rabies in animals is an observable change from normal behavior. Any wild animals that suddenly appear friendly, docile or approach humans should be considered suspect of being infected, and therefore avoided. Nocturnal animals such as raccoons and foxes that become active in the daytime should also be avoided. Several exposures occur each year in Alabama when children or pets approach these wild animals which have wandered into their yard.

Dr. Dee W. Jones, associate state public health veterinarian, said, "If a wild or stray animal is found around your home, it is best to contact animal control professionals."

Vaccination of domestic dogs, cats and ferrets not only protects the animals against rabies, but also creates a protective buffer between wildlife rabies and humans. State law requires that dogs, cats and ferrets remain currently vaccinated against rabies.

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