



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Rabid raccoon in Etowah County prompts reminders to immunize pets

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wild animals don't usually venture close to houses and they tend to avoid human contact, but animals infected with rabies can have altered behavior which can pose risks to humans and domestic animals. On April 19, a raccoon, which has been determined to be positive for rabies, was killed in the Coats Bend area after fighting with two dogs. This is the first laboratory-confirmed case of animal rabies in Etowah County this year. The dogs have been quarantined according to regulations for rabies observation.

Public officials encourage pet owners to be sure their dogs, cats and ferrets are vaccinated against rabies.

"We strongly caution people not to approach stray animals, wildlife and bats," said Dr. Dee W. Jones, State Public Health Veterinarian. "To protect yourself, your family and your pets from exposure to the rabies virus, you should follow these precautions."

- Avoid domestic and wild animals that are acting in a strange or unusual manner.
- Teach children to stay away from animals that are hurt or unknown to them.
- Instruct children to avoid approaching any wild animal, whether or not it is acting strangely.
- Advise children to tell an adult if they are bitten or scratched by an animal.

If you get an animal bite or scratch, wash the wound thoroughly under running water, immediately seek medical attention from your doctor or a hospital, and report the incident to the Etowah County Health Department for follow-up. Be sure your dogs and cats have up-to-date rabies vaccinations.

Rabies is a disease of all mammals, including man, and is always considered to be fatal unless preventative treatment is given following the bite. The primary means of exposure is through a bite or scratch with contaminated saliva from the animal. Transmission of the deadly virus also can occur if saliva contacts mucous membranes of the eye or mouth.

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

For additional information please contact the Alabama Department of Public Health, Bureau of Communicable Disease, Division of Epidemiology, at 1-800-677-0939 or the Etowah County Health Department at (256) 547-6311.

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