



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

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## **Immunize your pets during Rabies Awareness and Animal Bite Prevention Week**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Young children and postal workers are among the people who are often bitten by pets. In an effort to educate the public about pet vaccination requirements and ways to prevent animal bites, the Alabama Department of Public Health has designated May 16-21 as Rabies Awareness and Animal Bite Prevention Week in the state.

As part of this week, many counties will be conducting rabies vaccination clinics available at reduced fees. Please contact your county rabies officer, a licensed veterinarian appointed by the ADPH, for additional information about any upcoming rabies clinics in your area.

Alabama law requires all dogs, cats and ferrets to be vaccinated against rabies. Vaccination of pets not only protects these animals against rabies, but also creates an additional protective buffer between wildlife rabies and humans.

The rabies virus can infect all mammals, including man, and is always considered to be fatal unless preventative treatment is given following the bite. Virus transmission generally occurs through saliva from an infected animal. The primary means of exposure is from a bite or scratch, but exposure is also possible if infected saliva contacts the mucous membranes of the eye or mouth.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hundreds of thousands of Americans seek medical attention for animal bites each year; many of those bitten are children. "Animals of any breed can bite on occasion, especially if provoked or startled," said State Public Health Veterinarian, Dr. Dee W. Jones. "It is important to always use caution when approaching strange animals, and never attempt to pet a stray or injured animal."

The Alabama Department of Public Health recommends that 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 your county health department for follow-up. Additionally, using the following protective measures can help avoid exposure to the rabies virus:

- 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.

For additional information about rabies, animal bite prevention, or contact information for the rabies officer in your county, please call your local county health department or ADPH Division of Epidemiology at 1-800- 677-0939 or 334-206-5969.

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