



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Fight between dog and rabid raccoon in Talladega reminds pet owners of the need to immunize

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A hunting dog and a rabid raccoon became involved in a struggle within the Talladega city limits recently, with each animal biting one another. The raccoon died, and the dog's owner followed through by bringing the dead raccoon's body to his veterinarian for rabies testing. Public health authorities recommend that anyone touching a dead animal use caution, wear gloves, and remove and place the carcass in a bag before transporting it.

Similar incidents occur throughout the state. That's why public health officials urge pet owners to be sure their dogs, cats and ferrets are vaccinated against the fatal disease.

"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 Talladega County Health Department for follow-up. Be sure your pets 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.

Pets can be a common connection between wildlife and humans. Vaccination not only protects the pets 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. The law also requires that if a pet bites or scratches a human, it must be quarantined for a period of 10 days immediately afterward. As an additional incentive to keep pets vaccinated, pets with proof of vaccination may be authorized in certain circumstances to be quarantined at home instead of in a veterinary clinic.

For additional information please contact the Alabama Department of Public Health, Bureau of Communicable Disease, Division of Epidemiology, at 1-800-677-0939 or Alita Chappell, Environmental Services, Talladega County Health Department, (256) 362-2593.

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