



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Second raccoon in Foley area prompts heightened rabies warning

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local public health officials are urging people to take basic, but extremely important, precautions in the Foley area against rabies. The warning follows the confirmation of a second positive raccoon found during the past two weeks.

Baldwin County is considered to be endemic, which means that rabies is regularly present, but the close proximity of two recent positives in a short period of time has increased public health concerns. The biggest concern is that a rabid raccoon may come into contact with humans, their pets or livestock. Raccoons are the primary carriers for rabies, but the virus can infect other animals such as dogs, cats, foxes, coyotes and skunks.

According to State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Dee W. Jones, "The concern with the second positive in such a small geographical area means that it increases potential exposure to humans and domestic animals, especially in densely populated areas." He also explained, "It is not uncommon to get clusters of rabies infections within an endemic area, and such occurrences are not indicative of rabies becoming more prevalent, widespread or more dangerous."

The following precautions should be taken to avoid possible exposure to rabies:

- Do not allow pets to run loose; confine them within a fenced-in area or with a leash.
- Do not leave out uneaten pet food or scraps around your house.
- Do not illegally feed or keep wildlife as pets.
- Don't go near domestic animals that are acting in a strange or unusual manner.
- Instruct children not to go near any non-domesticated animal regardless of its behavior.
- Advise children to tell an adult if they are bitten or scratched by an animal.

A person who is bitten or scratched by an animal should wash wounds immediately with mild soap and water, apply first aid, and seek medical attention or contact the county health

department as soon as possible. Rabies is preventable in humans exposed to a positive animal if special medical treatment is provided in a timely manner.

Avoiding direct contact with wildlife is the primary protection from rabies. In addition, vaccinating domesticated animals also reduces the risk of exposure to rabies. Rabies vaccination not only protects the animals from rabies, it helps protect the owners, family members, and other pets as well. Alabama state law requires that all dogs, cats and ferrets must be kept current with rabies vaccination. Rabies vaccines are also available for horses and other livestock if recommended by a veterinarian.

For more information, contact the Alabama Department of Public Health, Bureau of Communicable Disease, Division of Epidemiology, at 1-800-338-8734 or the Baldwin County Health Department at (251) 972-6834.

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