



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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

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#### **Agencies monitor wildlife rabies in Autauga and Elmore counties**

##### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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The United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services Division (USDA WS) and the Alabama Department of Public Health are cooperating in active surveillance for rabies in wildlife in Autauga and Elmore counties. The areas of concentration lie west of the Alabama and Coosa River systems.

The active surveillance is an attempt to monitor the threat of rabies following two recent positive rabies cases in wildlife in areas west of the Coosa and Alabama rivers where rabies is not considered to be normally present. Rabies is mainly carried by raccoons; however, other species such as foxes and coyotes may also carry the disease. The surveillance methods will include the trapping and testing of wildlife, predominately raccoons, within a pre-determined geographic vicinity of recent positive rabies lab tests.

Property owners may be contacted by the USDA WS for permission to trap raccoons if the property is within the surveillance area. Property owners may contact the USDA if their property lies in the area of concern west of the river system, particularly if the land has a large population of raccoons or habitat suitable for wildlife.

According to Dr. Dee W. Jones, Alabama State Public Health Veterinarian, people should avoid any wild animal that is acting strangely. This includes a normally nocturnal animal such as a raccoon or fox seen during the day, which is unusually docile, or which approaches humans.

Every year the ADPH Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (State Health Lab) tests around 2,300 animal specimens resulting in approximately 80 positive cases, almost always in wildlife. The two recent positive wildlife cases confirmed in this area were in raccoons.

"This active surveillance should not be alarming to anyone," said Dr. Jones, "rather it is just a reminder of the importance of vaccinating animals and pets."

Vaccination of domestic animals 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.

For more information about the surveillance in Autauga and Elmore counties please contact the USDA WS at 1-888-RABIES4 or (334) 844-5670. For more information about positive rabies cases, rabies exposure or vaccination requirements for domestic animals, contact the Alabama Department of Public Health at (334) 206-5969.

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