



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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#### Rabid raccoon in Baldwin 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. A rabid raccoon in the Magnolia Springs area in Baldwin County has prompted public officials to issue precautions on how people can protect themselves from 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 animals that are acting in a strange or unusual manner.
- Instruct children to avoid approaching any non-domesticated animal regardless of its behavior.
- Advise children to tell an adult if they are bitten or scratched by an animal.

Rabies is a disease of all mammals, including man, and is always considered to be fatal unless preventative treatment is given following the exposure which is usually a bite or a scratch. If you get an animal bite or scratch, flush the wound thoroughly with either water or a dilute povidone-iodine solution. This solution, available in drug stores, decreases the risk of bacterial infection.

Immediately seek medical attention from your doctor or a hospital and report the incident to the local county health department so that appropriate quarantine or testing takes place. Transmission of the deadly virus also can occur if saliva contacts mucous membranes of the eye or mouth. A physician should always be consulted to determine if an exposure has occurred and preventative treatment is needed.

Baldwin County Public Health officials recommend that the recent rabid raccoon should further encourage pet owners to be sure their dogs, cats and ferrets are vaccinated against the fatal disease. Pets can have an unknown contact with a wild animal then potentially expose humans to rabies following an incubation period. Vaccination is very effective in reducing the risk for a

pet to become infected with the virus in the event of an exposure to another animal shedding the virus. 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 Charlotte Plumb at the Baldwin County Health Department, (251) 972-6834.

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