



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Rabid cat and raccoon in Shelby County prompt heightened rabies warning

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) has recently confirmed two cases of animal rabies within a five-mile area of northern Shelby County. A cat in the Indian Springs area and a raccoon in the Heatherwood subdivision tested positive for the rabies virus. The raccoon had been fighting with a dog.

Rabies targets the central nervous system of all mammals, including humans, and is always fatal.

The virus is transmitted by saliva. In general, rabies exposure requires direct contact with infected saliva, usually through a bite or a scratch, but other less common contact exposures with mucous membranes (eyes, nose, and mouth) should be considered as potential exposures.

State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Dee W. Jones said, "Health officials will be working with wildlife agencies to further identify the extent of the rabies activity in raccoons. Rabies prevention is multifaceted; it involves people taking precautions with wildlife, making sure their pets are current on rabies vaccinations, and always reporting an animal bite or other exposure to their medical provider or the health department."

Area residents are advised to take the following precautions 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 uneaten pet food or scraps near your residence.
- Do not illegally feed or keep wildlife as pets.
- Do not go near wildlife or domestic animals that are acting in a strange or unusual manner.
- Caution children not to go near any stray or wild animal, regardless of its behavior.
- Advise children to tell an adult if they are bitten or scratched by any 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 immediately.

Alabama state law requires that dogs, cats and ferrets 12 weeks of age and older be current with rabies vaccination. Rabies vaccines are also available for horses and other livestock if recommended by a veterinarian. Vaccinating animals reduces the risk of rabies infection should an exposure occur, thus vaccinations helps protect animals, as well as their owners and caretakers.

For more information about rabies and prevention, please contact your county health department. You may also call ADPH at 1-800-338-8374 or (334) 206-5971 or visit <http://www.adph.org/epi/default.asp?id=3385>.