



**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Bobcat Tests Positive for Rabies**

**Bay County** – A bobcat tested positive for rabies on January 31, 2012. The bobcat was killed by a dog in West Bay, just south of the Highway 79 B.V Buchanan Bridge. This is the first Bay County animal to test positive for rabies in 2012. In 2011, Bay County led the State of Florida with 10 animals testing positive for rabies, including seven raccoons, two domestic cats, and a bat. The Bay County Health Department is reminding citizens that Bay County is still under a rabies alert until February 4, 2012.

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans. The only treatment for human exposure to rabies is rabies specific immune globulin and rabies immunization. Appropriate treatment started soon after the exposure, will protect an exposed person from the disease.

An animal with rabies could infect other wild animals or domestic animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies. Florida Statutes require all dogs and cats over 4 months of age to be **currently vaccinated for rabies by a licensed veterinarian**. Vaccines purchased at “feed stores” and administered by the animal’s owner do not meet this requirement.

The Bay County Health Department would like to remind citizens that it is illegal to feed raccoons, either directly or indirectly. Feeding raccoons artificially increases their population and increases the likelihood diseases like rabies will spread and conflicts with domestic animals will occur. All wildlife contact should be avoided, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats and coyotes.

The following advice is issued:

- Supervise your pets when they are outdoors.
- Secure outside garbage in covered containers to avoid attracting wild animals.
- Do not leave pet food outside overnight as this attracts wild animals to your home and increases the chance of a pet-raccoon conflict.
- If bitten or scratched by an animal, wash the wound immediately with soap and water. Seek medical treatment as needed and report the injury to the Bay County Health Department at (850) 872-4720, X1125. If the animal is a stray or wild animal, call Bay County Animal Control at (850) 248-6030 and report its location. Follow up. Rabies is preventable when treatment is provided in a timely manner.
- Do not touch animals that are not yours. Avoid contact with **all** wildlife, especially raccoons, bats, bobcats, otters, foxes, skunks and coyotes. No animal is too young to have rabies.
- For general questions pertaining to animals, contact the Bay County Animal Control at (850) 248-6030.
- For questions regarding the health of an animal, contact a veterinarian.
- Teach your children about rabies.

For further information on rabies, go to the Florida Department of Health website: website: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/medicine/rabies/rabies-index.html> or contact Bay County Health Department at 850-872-4720, X1125.

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