

For Immediate Release
Date: October 26, 2011

Contact Person: Michael Templin
Environmental Health Specialist,
Bay County Health Department
Phone: (850)872-4720, X1125

Rabies Alert

The Bay County Health Department has extended the October 13, 2011 rabies alert. That alert was in response to two rabid cats. This extension is for 60 days and includes all areas of Bay County, Florida. The centers of the alert include the Bayhead area of Youngstown, The City of Springfield east and west of School Avenue, and areas west and south of the Navy Base on Panama City Beach.

In the last two weeks there were two daytime raccoon-dog conflicts in a neighborhood off Laird Street in the unincorporated area of Panama City Beach. The raccoons involved in those conflicts have not been located. Based on their behavior they are considered possibly rabid.

On October 25, a bat found in the Bay Point area of Panama City Beach and a raccoon found near Springfield Elementary School tested positive for rabies.

All citizens in Bay County should be aware that rabies is present in the wild animal population and domestic animals are at risk if not vaccinated. With the approach of hunting season, hunters should be aware that dog-raccoon contact may expose dogs to rabies. If your dog is not vaccinated by a licensed veterinarian, it is not vaccinated.

An animal with rabies could infect other wild animals or domestic animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies. All domestic animals should be vaccinated against rabies. All wildlife contact should be avoided, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats and coyotes. No animal is too young to have rabies. Never touch a bat!

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.

The following advice is issued:

- Florida Statutes require all dogs and cats over 4 months of age to be currently vaccinated for rabies by a licensed veterinarian.
- Secure outside garbage in covered containers to avoid attracting wild animals.
- Do not leave pet food outside. This also attracts other animals.
- For questions regarding the health of an animal, contact a veterinarian..
- 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.
- For general questions pertaining to animals, contact the Bay County Animal Control at (850) 248-6030.

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.