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Rabies Alert issued for the Southwest area of Orange County



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ORLANDO, FL – The Florida Department of Health in Orange County is issuing a rabies alert for the southwest area of Orange County. The alert area is located south of State Road 528 (Martin Anderson Beachline Expressway), west of the Florida Turnpike, east of Orangewood Boulevard, and north of Deerfield Boulevard.

The alert is in response to a raccoon that tested positive for the disease. The identified raccoon may have infected feral cats in the area. Contact with feral cats, stray dogs and all wildlife particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats and coyotes should be avoided.

If you or a family member has been bitten or scratched by a raccoon or if you know anyone bitten or scratched by a raccoon, you should seek medical attention and contact Orange County Animal Services at (407) 254-9150.

Residents and visitors in the southwest area of Orange County should be aware that rabies is present in the wild animal population, and domestic animals are at risk if not vaccinated. The public is asked to maintain a heightened awareness that rabies is active in this area of Orange County.

Alerts are designed to increase awareness to the public. This alert should not give a false sense of security to areas that have not been named under this alert. This rabies alert is for 60 days or until further notice.

Domestic or wild animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies could be infected by an animal that has rabies. All domestic animals should be vaccinated against rabies.

The following advice is issued:

- All pets should have current rabies immunizations.
- Secure outside garbage in covered containers to avoid attracting wild animals.
- Do not leave pet food outside. This also attracts other animals.
- Avoid contact with **all** wildlife, especially feral cats, raccoons, bats, and foxes.
- If bitten or scratched by a suspected rabid animal, wash the wound immediately with soap and water, seek medical attention, and promptly report the incident to Orange County Animal Services (407) 254-9150.
- Rabies is preventable when treatment is provided in a timely manner.

- For general questions pertaining to animals, contact Orange County Animal Services (407) 254-9150.

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system that can cause paralysis and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans. The virus is spread through saliva, and humans may become infected through a bite wound, scratch or exposure of a fresh cut to saliva of a rabid animal. The only treatment for human exposure to rabies is rabies specific immune globulin and rabies immunization. Appropriate treatment which is started soon after the exposure will protect an exposed person from the disease.

For more information on rabies, visit the DOH website at doh.state.fl.us/Environment/medicine/rabies/rabies-index.html or the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies.

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