



Santa Rosa County Public Information ▪ 4499 Pine Forest Road ▪ Milton, Florida ▪ 32583 ▪ (850) 983-5254

July 20, 2010
#100720-RABIES

Contact: Joy Tsubooka
Public Information Officer
(850) 983-5254, (850) 393-8304 Cell
joyt@santarosa.fl.gov

Confirmed Case of Rabies Found in Allentown

A domesticated cat that bit and scratched an elderly woman in Allentown on Friday, July 16, has tested positive for the rabies virus. Santa Rosa County Animal Control Officers and the Sheriff's Office are going door-to-door to approximately five homes in the rural Penton Road area, notifying residents of the infection and asking those with pets for proof of current vaccination. Any unvaccinated cat or dog, including strays, will be taken to Santa Rosa County Animal Services and quarantined for ten days. Six humane traps have also been set in the area.

The victim reported the bite after the cat exhibited unusually aggressive behavior, a common sign of rabies. If bitten, please:

1. Wash any wounds with soap and water.
2. Seek medical attention immediately and report the incident to the Santa Rosa County Health Department at (850) 983-5200 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday or after hours, call (850) 418-5566.
3. Report the attacking or any animal displaying suspicious behavior and its location to Santa Rosa County Animal Services at (850) 983-4680 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday- Friday, and Saturday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Night and holiday emergencies can be reported to (850) 983-5372.

Rabies is a contagious and fatal disease which all warm-blooded animals, including man, are susceptible. Although effective vaccinations and stray animal laws can control rabies among dogs and cats, the disease is difficult to control in wildlife. Nationally 85 percent of all rabies cases are caused by wildlife including raccoons, bats, skunks and foxes.

With your help, rabies can be prevented. Please follow these tips to help ensure the safety of your family:

- Keep your rabies vaccinations current.
- Do not leave your pets outside unsupervised.
- Keep animals contained on your property, which includes cats. We recommend cats to be indoor pets due to their tendency to wander.
- Notify animal services of stray animals and do not allow your children to play with, touch or feed any strays.
- Do not approach wild animals. Do not keep skunks, raccoons, bats or other wild animals as pets. **Never feed a wild animal from your hand.**
- Do not feed dogs or cats out-of-doors this will attract wild animals and strays.
- Do not place feeders in the yard – the food will attract unwanted animals such as raccoons and foxes.
- Secure trash cans with fasteners.

It is Florida State law that every owner of an animal, four months of age or older, must vaccinate their animals against rabies by a licensed veterinarian with the U.S. approved rabies vaccine. Local animal control officers can impound any animal that does not have a rabies tag and/or a rabies certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian. If a pet is impounded, the owner will be responsible for obtaining the proper vaccination within 72 hours and will have to pay any impound fees. Violators can incur fines up to \$500.

For more information, contact Santa Rosa County Animal Services at (850) 983-4680 or on the Web at <http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/animals/index.html>.

#