

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**DRIVE THRU RABIES VACCINATION CLINIC FOR DOGS AND CATS
WILL COINCIDE WITH WORLD RABIES DAY**

Milton, FL - In observance of World Rabies Day, the Santa Rosa County Health Department and Santa Rosa County Animal Services will host the 2nd Annual Rabies Drive Thru Vaccination Clinic for dogs and cats, Friday, September 28, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 pm. at the Santa Rosa County Animal Shelter, 4451 Pine Forest Road in Milton.

Local veterinarians, Dr. Michael Mongue of Pace Veterinary Clinic, Dr. C. David Summerlin and Dr. Amy Harper of The Ark Animal Hospital, will administer the injections to dogs and cats. The fee is \$10. Pets and owners will remain in the vehicle at all times. No other services will be available at the clinic. A certificate of vaccination and rabies tag will be provided for each pet that is vaccinated.

"We at the health department, and I know Animal Services as well, are extremely grateful to these veterinarians for taking time away from their own practices to provide this valuable service to the community," said Mary Beverly, epidemiologist with the Santa Rosa County Health Department. "Last year 197 dogs and cats were vaccinated. We are hoping to exceed that number this year."

Rabies is a disease that affects the brain. The virus is carried in the saliva of infected animals and is usually transmitted to people and other animals through a bite or scratch. In the U.S., more than 90 percent of rabies cases occur in wild animals, such as raccoons, foxes, skunks and bats, but domesticated animals can carry it as well. Unvaccinated pets that are kept outside, or are allowed to roam freely, are at high risk for contracting the virus, if they come into contact with wild animals.

Rabies is fatal to humans and animals, but rabies in humans can be prevented if rabies vaccine is administered as soon as possible after exposure. Treatment consists of an injection of immune globulin, directly into the wound if the individual has been bitten or scratched, followed by a series of four injections of rabies vaccine in the deltoid (the large muscle in the upper arm) over a period of about two weeks. Post exposure shots can be expensive, anywhere from \$1800 to \$2500, and insurance may not cover all the cost. In 2011, post exposure rabies shots were recommended for 36 people in Santa Rosa County who had contact with animals that may have been infected with rabies. Most of the animals were dogs and cats whose vaccination status was unknown.

An animal suffering from rabies may appear sick or lethargic, have problems swallowing, or drool or salivate excessively. A wild animal may appear tamer than usual and some animals may have no visible symptoms. There is no treatment for animals that have been exposed to rabies and euthanasia is usually recommended. One of the safest and easiest way to protect pets against rabies is through vaccination by a licensed veterinarian.

The Santa Rosa County Health Department also advises residents to take these precautions to avoid exposing themselves, or their pets, to rabies:

- Avoid all contact with wild and unfamiliar domesticated animals.
- Do not place feeders in the yard – the food will attract unwanted animals such as raccoons and foxes.
- **Vaccinate pets against rabies and keep their shots up-to-date.** Follow your veterinarian's recommendation for revaccination.
- Do not leave pets outside unsupervised.
- Bring in pet food at night and secure trash can lids with fasteners.
- Cover bird feeders. Most squirrel-proof coverings also deter wild animals.
- Children should never chase or attempt to catch or touch a wild or unfamiliar animal, and should tell an adult if a wild or strange animal tries to approach them.

If bitten, or scratched by a wild animal or stray domesticated animal, wash the wound immediately with soap and water. This is the first line of defense against rabies! Seek medical attention immediately and report the incident to the Santa Rosa County Health Department at (850) 983-5275 between the hours of 8:00a.m. and 5:00p.m. Monday through Friday, or after hours call (850) 418-5566.

For more information on rabies, visit the Centers For Disease Control (CDC) website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>. If you see a suspicious animal in your yard or neighborhood, call animal control at (850) 983-4680. If a dead wild animal is on your property, contact the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission's regional office at (850) 265-3676, or their 24-hour law enforcement hotline at (888) 404-3922.

For more information about the 2nd Annual Drive Thru Rabies Vaccination Clinic, call Mary Beverly at the Santa Rosa County Health Department at 850-983-5200, ext. 105.

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