

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN INDIAN RIVER AND SAINT LUCIE COUNTY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 22, 2015

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(772) 370-1391

### JOINT RABIES ALERT ISSUED FOR INDIAN RIVER AND ST. LUCIE COUNTIES

*~Residents and visitors should avoid contact with stray and wild animals~*

**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY AND ST. LUCIE COUNTY, FL** – The Florida Department of Health in Indian River and St. Lucie Counties have issued a rabies alert for southern Indian River County and northern St. Lucie County. This alert is in response to a raccoon that tested positive for rabies on June 19 following an unprovoked attack on two domestic dogs.

Earlier this month, the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County issued a rabies alert for the central geographical region of St. Lucie County in response to a cat that tested positive for rabies reported on June 2.

Health officials urge residents to protect themselves from the risk of rabies exposure by avoiding contact with wild and stray animals and to vaccinate their pets.

“We strongly advise residents not to approach or feed wild and stray animals, and keep their pets vaccinated,” said Miranda Hawker, Indian River County Health Officer.

All residents of Indian River and St. Lucie 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 Indian River and St. Lucie Counties. Alerts are designed to increase awareness to the public, but they should not give a false sense of security to areas that have not been named as under an alert.

This rabies alert will remain in effect for 60 days for:

- South of Oslo Road;
- North of Indrio Road;
- East of I-95; and
- West of US Hwy 1 and Turnpike Feeder Road.

**Florida Department of Health**  
In Indian River County  
1900 27<sup>th</sup> Street  
Vero Beach, FL 32960  
PHONE: 772/794-7400  
<http://indianriver.floridahealth.gov>



**www.FloridasHealth.com**  
TWITTER: HealthyFLA  
FACEBOOK: FLDepartmentofHealth  
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FLICKR: HealthyFla  
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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 and all wildlife contact should be avoided, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats and coyotes. Free ranging domestic cats that compete with wild animals for food sources are also a rabies risk.

“An exposure to rabies can be fatal for a human or a pet, and we will continue to stress the importance of vaccination for pets and other animals which represent the best preventive measure available,” said St. Lucie County Health Officer Clint Sperber.

Rabies is a deadly viral disease of the nervous system that can be prevented, but not cured. The virus is spread through the saliva of infected warm blooded animals to other animals or persons, usually through a bite. Infection may also occur if saliva enters open wounds, the mouth or eyes of another animal or person. Appropriate rabies vaccine treatment started soon after the exposure will protect an exposed person from the disease.

Here are some tips to protect you and your pets from rabies:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance immediately and report the incident to your local animal control agency. (See contact information below)
- Call your local animal control agency directly to remove any wild or stray animals from your neighborhood that are injured or demonstrate unusual behavior.
- Do not handle, feed or unintentionally attract wild or stray animals, including cats, by leaving pet food outside or garbage cans open.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Call animal control for assistance rather than trying to nurse injured or sick wild or stray animals.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools and other similar areas, where they might come in contact with people and pets.
- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and promptly report exposure to local animal control.
  - For St. Lucie County residents or visitors, contact the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County, Epidemiology program, at (772) 462-3883 to complete a bite report.
  - For Indian River County residents or visitors, contact the local animal control agency. Local animal control agencies in Indian River County coordinate the exposure investigation with the Florida Department of Health in Indian River County.

**Animal Control Agency Contact Information:**

Indian River County Animal Control: (772) 226-3486  
City of Vero Beach Police Department: (772) 978-4600  
City of Fort Pierce Animal Control: (772) 467-3148  
City of Port Saint Lucie Animal Control: (772) 871-5042  
Saint Lucie County Animal Control: (772) 462-8120

For further information on rabies, go to the Florida Department of Health website: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html> or contact Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County at (772) 462-3800 or Florida Department of Health in Indian River County at (772) 794-7440.

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