

November 9, 2015

RABIES ALERT EXTENDED

For St. Lucie County



Contact:

Arlease Hall, Public Information Officer

Arlease.Hall@flhealth.gov, 772-370-1391

(St. Lucie, County) – The Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County (DOH-St. Lucie) is extending the alert, originally issued on October 22nd, to an additional 60 days from today's date. The reason for this extension is a positive rabies test was reported on an unvaccinated St. Lucie County domestic dog from Florida's Bureau of Public Health Laboratories on Friday, November 6th. This is the 2nd domestic dog to test positive for rabies in the entire state for all of 2015. The geographical area related to the rabies alert remains the same and includes:

- North of Prima Vista Blvd
- East of St. Lucie County Fair Grounds
- West of Highway A1A
- South of Indrio Rd

St. Lucie County's five year average is two rabid animals a year. As of the first week in November, there have been six animals that tested positive for rabies including one domestic dog, one cat, three raccoons and one bat. The public is asked to maintain a heightened awareness that rabies is active in St. Lucie County. Alerts are designed to increase awareness to the public, but they should not give a false sense of security to areas that are not indicated in the alert.

St. Lucie County Health Officer Clint Sperber strongly encourages all residents to get their animals vaccinated against rabies. "Pets are part of the family and one of the best things you can do to keep them safe from this fatal disease is to get them vaccinated. We know rabies is present in the community and we want to keep our residents and their pets safe so we are partnering with local veterinarian offices, animal control agencies and The Humane Society of St. Lucie County to promote rabies prevention and vaccination".

The following are steps you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones against rabies:

- **KEEP** rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- **KEEP** your pets under direct supervision so they do not come in contact with wild animals. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact your local animal control services.
- **CALL** your local animal control agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood.
- **SPAY** or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.

- **DO NOT** handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- **NEVER** adopt wild animals or bring them into your home.
- **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.

Residents should avoid contact with wild and stray animals to protect themselves from the risk of rabies exposure. 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 with raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats and coyotes. Rabies is transmitted through exposure to the saliva and nervous tissue from a rabid animal through a bite, scratch, or contact with mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose, or mouth.

Unusual acting animals should be reported to local animal services for handling at:

- St. Lucie County Animal Control 772-462-8120
- Port St Lucie Animal Control 772-871-5042
- Fort Pierce Animal Control 772-467-3149

If bitten or scratched by a wild animal or stray you should report the incident to your doctor immediately, as well as local animal services and the local county health department. The contact number to report an animal bite to DOH-St. Lucie is 772-462-3883.

If you have an unvaccinated pet the Humane Society of St. Lucie County, Inc. is having their 2nd Annual Walk the Walk Against Animal Cruelty event on November 14th at Tradition Square from 10 AM – 1 PM. **Rabies vaccinations will be available for \$10.** For more information about Walk the Walk Against Animal Cruelty and this affordable opportunity to get your pet vaccinated please go to www.hsslc.org. For more information on low cost rabies vaccinations being offered by local community partners you can contact:

- The Humane Society of St Lucie County 772-466-7387
- Midway Veterinary Hospital 772-466-6298 (correct number)

For further information on rabies and rabies surveillance, go to the Florida Department of Health website: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/> and <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/rabiessurveillance.html> or contact DOH-St. Lucie's Environmental Health office at 772- 873- 4931.

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