

July 18, 2018

HEALTH OFFICIALS LIFT RABIES ALERT

~Remind residents and visitors to continue to avoid contact with stray and wild animals~



Contact:

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Indian River County, Fla. – The Florida Department of Health in Indian River (DOH-Indian River) is lifting the rabies alert for Indian River County. The alert has been in place since May 15, 2018 when a stray cat tested positive for rabies. The rabies alert was issued for the following boundaries:

- South of State Route 60 also known as 20th Street
- North of Oslo Road also known as 9th Street SW
- East of 66th Avenue
- West of US Highway 1

There have been no other positive laboratory results for rabies within 60 days. This is an appropriate timeframe to lift advisory. However, in Florida there is a risk of rabies transmission year-round.

All residents of Indian River County should continue to be aware that rabies is present in the wild animal population and domestic animals are at risk if not vaccinated.

An animal with rabies could infect 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 at risk for getting rabies.

"We continue to urge residents to avoid contact with wild and stray animals, and keep their pets vaccinated and restrained. Rabies is an ongoing threat to both people and pets in our county, as well as neighboring counties, Brevard and St. Lucie, which are currently under rabies advisories." said Miranda Hawker, Indian River County Health Officer.

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans. The only treatment for human exposure to rabies is rabies specific immune globulin and rabies immunization. Appropriate 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:

- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and promptly report exposure to local animal control.
- Do not handle, feed or unintentionally attract wild or stray animals, including cats, by leaving pet food outside or garbage cans open.

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets and at-risk livestock.
- Do not allow your pets to run free. Follow leash laws by keeping pets secured on your property.
- If your pet is bitten by a wild, stray or unknown 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.
- 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.
- Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.
- Local animal control agencies in Indian River County coordinate animal exposure investigations 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

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 Indian River County at (772) 794-7440.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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