

January 27, 2022

## HEALTH OFFICIALS ISSUE RABIES ALERT

*Rabies Confirmed in Charlotte County*

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**Charlotte County, Fla.**— The Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County (DOH-Charlotte) issued a rabies alert for the Port Charlotte area. This is in response to an animal that tested positive on January 26, 2022.

All residents and visitors in Charlotte 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 Charlotte County. Alerts are designed to increase awareness to the public, but they should not get a false sense of security to areas that have not been named as under an alert.

The recent rabies alert is for 30 days. The center of the rabies alert is at Turbak Road and includes the following boundaries in Charlotte County:

North from Peace River Shores Blvd. to Palm Shores Blvd.

West from Live Oak Blvd to Lafayette Street.

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 contact with all wildlife should be avoided, particularly bats, raccoons, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats, and coyotes.

The following advice is issued:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact Charlotte County Animal Control at (941) 833-5690.
- Call Charlotte County Animal Control to remove stray animals from your neighborhood.
- Do not handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals by leaving pet food outside, or garbage cans open.
- 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.

- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and report the injury to DOH-Charlotte at (941) 624-7200.

To avoid being bitten:

- Dogs are more likely to bite other dogs than people; when walking your own pet dog, avoid areas where free-roaming dogs may be present.
- If another dog attacks your dog, don't put any part of your body between the dogs; consider carrying a stick or another sturdy object that you can safely use to try to keep the aggressive dog away.
- Do not make eye-to-eye contact with a stray or aggressive acting dog.
- Do not run or scream if a stray dog approaches you – be “still like a tree.” If you fall or are knocked to the ground by a dog, curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck. Protect your face. Try to stay still and do not scream.
- Report stray dogs to local authorities such as animal control.

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system that can cause paralysis and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans. The virus is spread through saliva, and humans may become infected through a bite wound, scratch or exposure of a fresh cut to saliva of a rabid animal. 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.

For more information on rabies, visit the DOH website at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html> or the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>.

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