

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**October 15, 2025**



## **DOH-Polk Issues Rabies Alert**

**Contact:**

Lydia George, Public Information Officer  
Lydia.George@flhealth.gov  
863-578-2146

**Bartow, Fla. —** The Florida Department of Health in Polk County (DOH-Polk) is issuing a rabies alert in Polk County in response to a confirmed case of rabies in a stray cat that was captured in the South Lakeland area off South Carter Road in Polk County on October 13, 2025. DOH-Polk is monitoring rabies among wild animals in the area. All residents and visitors should be aware that rabies is currently present in the wild animal population.

People and domestic animals should always avoid physical contact with wild animals (e.g., raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats, coyotes), which carry a higher risk of human exposure and a need for rabies post-exposure treatment. If you are exposed to rabies, receiving appropriate treatment after exposure will protect you from the risk of rabies.

This rabies alert is for 60 days and includes the following boundaries in Polk County:

- **Northern boundary:** Polk Parkway
- **Southern boundary:** W Carter Road/E Carter Road
- **Eastern boundary:** Lakeland Highlands Road
- **Western boundary:** State Road 37

**Take the following precautions to prevent rabies exposure:**

- Immunize your pets and livestock based on your veterinarian's recommended schedule.
- Keep pets under direct supervision and on a leash, and keep livestock secured on your property. If an animal bites your pet or livestock, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact Polk County Sheriff's Office Animal Control at 863-577-1762
- Avoid contact with wild or stray animals. Do not handle, feed, or unintentionally attract them with outdoor pet food, open garbage cans, or other sources of food. If you have been bitten or scratched by a wild or domestic animal, seek medical attention, and report the injury to DOH-Polk by calling 863-519-8300.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home; instead, contact a [licensed wildlife rehabilitator](#).
- Call your local animal control agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood. Contact Polk County Sheriff's Office Animal Control at 863-577-1762.
- Prevent wildlife, including [bats](#), from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, schools, and other similar areas where they might come in contact with people and pets.

For more information on rabies, please visit [FloridaHealth.gov/Rabies](https://www.floridahealth.gov/rabies) or contact DOH-Polk at 863-519-8300.

###

### **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.

Follow us on X at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health, visit [FloridaHealth.gov](https://www.floridahealth.gov).