11/18/2026

DOH-Gilchrist Issues Rabies Advisory

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Gilchrist County, Fla.—The Florida Department of Health in Gilchrist County (DOH-Gilchrist) is monitoring rabies among wild animals in the area. This is in response to a single confirmed case of rabies in a raccoon that was found deceased in the northwest area of Bell in Gilchrist County on November 17, 2026. All residents and visitors should be aware that rabies may be 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.

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 **Gilchrist County Animal Services** at **352-463-4084**.
- 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-Gilchrist** by calling **352-463-3120.**
- 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 **Gilchrist County Animal Services** at **352-463-4084**.
- 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. If you have questions or concerns about wildlife please contact **Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)** at **386-758-0525.**

For more information on rabies, please visit FloridaHealth.gov/Rabies or contact **DOH-Gilchrist** at **352-463-3120.**

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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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