



April 29, 2022

RACCOON IN CITRA TESTS POSITIVE FOR RABIES

Contact:

Bill Thompson, Public Information Officer

William.Thompson@flhealth.gov

Desk: 352-644-2664

Mobile: 352-843-9471

Ocala, Fla.—The Florida Department of Health in Marion County wants Citra-area residents to be aware that a raccoon in their community tested positive for rabies. People who live or work in that area should pay close attention, especially those who live north of County Road 329, south of County Road 316, east of U.S. 441 and west of Northeast 47th Avenue. The positive test results indicate rabies is active in that area.

Pets and domestic animals are vulnerable to animals with rabies if they are not vaccinated for the disease. The department encourages all owners of pets or livestock to get their animals vaccinated for rabies. Rabies is always a danger among wild animals.

The Department of Health strongly recommends that anyone who has been bitten or scratched by any animal, wild or domestic, seek medical attention immediately, but do not panic. Those bitten or scratched should also report the injury to the department, the county Animal Services Department, or local law enforcement.

If your pet or livestock is bitten by a wild animal, seek immediate help from a veterinarian for the animal and contact the Animal Services Department.

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system that is fatal to humans if left untreated. It's also fatal to unvaccinated warm-blooded animals.

The department recommends that anyone who believes they were at risk from a potential rabies exposure obtain post-exposure prophylaxis, or PEP, treatment.

PEP is the series of shots administered to build up the patient's immunity to rabies. PEP is recommended when the animal tests positive for rabies, or when testing the animal is not possible because it could not be found for observation or testing.

Dogs are often the animals most closely associated with a rabies infection. But canine-related rabies infections are rare in Florida due to a high vaccination rate among dogs. In Marion County, the most common carriers are raccoons, bats and cats, typically feral cats.

The department also has initiated investigations for possible rabies exposure because of human contact with foxes, squirrels, rats, rabbits, pigs, horses, opossums, goats, deer, coyotes and bears.

To prevent possible rabies infection, the Department of Health reminds county residents and visitors to take the following precautions:

- Avoid all contact with wild animals.
- Never feed wild or stray animals, even by providing food sources outdoors.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home.
- Supervise pets and do not allow them to roam free. Secure livestock on your property.
- Never handle unfamiliar animals (wild or domestic), even if they appear friendly.
- Vaccinate all pets and livestock.
- Realize that rabies is not transmitted only through bites. People or animals can contract rabies through scratches or exposure to an infected animal's saliva, such as from licks or a pet that has shared a food source with a positive carrier.

If your pet or livestock is attacked by a wild animal or a stray you suspect is unvaccinated, you must wear gloves if you examine your pet. Do not let your animal contact other animals or people until the situation is handled by animal control or county health department staff.

Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas where they might encounter people and pets.

Visit marion.floridahealth.gov or cdc.gov/rabies to learn more about rabies and prevention.

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 [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov