



Florida Health Mission:

To protect, promote
& improve the health
of all people
in Florida through
integrated state, county,
& community efforts.

Rick Scott
Governor

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Surgeon General & Secretary

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Lee County**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Florida Department of Health in Lee County
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**HEALTH OFFICIALS URGE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO
AVOID CONTACT WITH WILD AND STRAY ANIMALS**

Lee County, FL— The Florida Department of Health in Lee County urges residents and visitors to avoid contact with wild and stray animals to protect themselves from the risk of rabies exposure.

In Florida, raccoons, bats, foxes and unvaccinated cats are the animals most frequently diagnosed with rabies. Other animals that are at high risk for rabies include skunks, otters, coyotes, bobcats and stray or unvaccinated dogs and ferrets.

“Rabies is a potentially fatal disease,” said Jennifer Roth, DOH-Lee epidemiologist. “It is important not to handle wild animals, to be aware of unusual acting animals and to keep pets vaccinated against rabies.”

Rabies is transmitted through exposure to the saliva and nervous tissue from a rabid animal through a bite, scratch or contact with mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose or mouth. DOH-Lee works with Lee County Domestic Animal Services in responding to incidents of domestic animal bites. DOH-Lee tests animals for rabies through the Department of Health state laboratory and Lee County quarantines animals as necessary.

The following are steps you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones against rabies:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- Keep your pets under direct supervision so they do not come in contact with wild animals. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately.
- Call Lee County Domestic Animal Services at (239) 533-7387 to remove any domestic stray animals from your neighborhood.
- Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.
- **Do not** handle, feed or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- **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.

Anyone who is bitten or scratched by wild animals or strays should report the incident to their doctor immediately, then to DOH-Lee at (239) 332-9580.

For further information on rabies, go to <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html> or call the Florida Department of Health in Lee County at (239) 332-9580 or Lee County Domestic Animal Services at (239) 533-7387.

The Department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at @HealthyFla and on Facebook. For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.

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Note to Media: Media in need of more information about stray dogs and/or Lee County Domestic Animal Services can contact Lee County's Ria Brown at (239) 533-9202.

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Please Note: Florida has a very broad public records law. Most written communications to or from state officials regarding state business are public records available to the public and media upon request. Your e-mail communications may therefore be subject to public disclosure.