

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Rabies alert extended to January 26, 2010**

- One additional animal confirmed to have rabies -

PENSACOLA – Dr. John Lanza, Director of the Escambia County (FL) Health Department, today extended the rabies alert for central and northern Escambia County, Florida, due to an additional animal in the existing alert area testing positive for rabies. The first 60-day Rabies Alert was issued August 28, 2009 to last a period of 60 days and was extended to November 29, 2009 when three additional animals in the alert area were found to be rabid.

This rabies alert is for central and northern Escambia County, Florida, and includes the following area boundaries:

- Southern boundary is Muscogee Road Hwy 184 and Becks Lake Road
- Eastern boundary is the Escambia River
- Western boundary is the Perdido River
- Northern boundary is the Alabama state line

The Escambia County Health Department received laboratory-confirmation of rabies in a cat in late October. The cat was sent for testing after interacting with humans.

“Rabies will kill humans and their pets if it is not treated,” said Dr. Lanza. “I urge residents to keep their pets vaccinated, to stay away from wild animals, and to take basic precautions to keep wild animals from coming to your home.”

The Escambia County Health Department recommends that all residents:

- Keep their pets’ rabies immunizations current.
- Avoid contact with all wildlife, especially raccoons, bats, foxes and skunks. This includes feral cats and dogs.
- Secure outside garbage in covered containers to avoid attracting wild animals.
- Do not leave pet food outside as this practice also attracts other animals.
- If exposed to or bitten by a wild animal – including feral cats and dogs -- contact a physician for evaluation.

Escambia residents 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 Escambia County (FL). Alerts are designed to increase awareness to the public, but they should not give a false sense of security to areas that have not been named as under an alert.

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 humans should avoid all wildlife contact, especially with raccoons, bats, and foxes.

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is usually fatal to warm-blooded animals and to humans. 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 further information on rabies, go to the Florida Department of Health website: [http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease\\_ctrl/epi/diseases.htm](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/epi/diseases.htm) or contact the Escambia County Health Department, Environmental Health office at (850) 595-6700.

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