



## Health and Human Services **MEDIA RELEASE**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 3, 2017

# **Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) reminds residents to avoid wild animals**

## ***Rabies Alert for Venice and North Port***

SARASOTA COUNTY— The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) received laboratory confirmation on Friday, Dec. 30 of rabies in a bobcat. Health officials say two bobcat attacks occurred within four miles of one another in east Venice between Venice Avenue and U.S. 41, approximately two miles west of River Road. **A Rabies Alert is in effect for 60 days for Venice and North Port.**

All residents, especially in this vicinity, 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 Sarasota County. 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.

Rabies is caused by a virus, which humans and other mammals can get through an animal bite. In Florida, rabies is usually associated with bites or scratches from raccoons, bats, foxes, and unvaccinated outside cats. The virus can spread through contact with saliva or nervous tissue of a rabid animal through an open wound, the mouth, nose or eyes. Rabies is nearly always fatal without proper medical treatment. The only treatment for human exposure to rabies is rabies specific immune globulin and rabies immunization which should be started soon after the exposure to protect an exposed person from the disease.

People are encouraged not to keep pet food outside, secure all garbage containers, and keep pets under supervision. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Animal Services Section at 941-861-9500. If you see or are approached by what appears to be an aggressive or ill animal, maintain a safe distance and contact law enforcement immediately by dialing 911 or the sheriff's office non-emergency line at 941-316-1201.

Hunters should harvest only healthy appearing game, wear rubber or latex gloves when dressing carcasses, and wash hands afterwards. If a domestic or wild animal bites or scratches you, seek care promptly. Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for five to ten minutes. Immediately visit your primary doctor, hospital or county health department for medical attention. Report an animal bite to DOH-Sarasota at 941-861-6133.

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### **MEDIA NOTES:**

#### **DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:**

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For more information on rabies, go to the Florida Department of Health website at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html> or call the Department of Health in Sarasota County Environmental Health office at 941-861-6133 or Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Animal Services at 941-861-9500.

## **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 Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit [www.FloridaHealth.gov](http://www.FloridaHealth.gov).

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Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities.  
View the complete policy at [www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx)

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