



Health and Human Services MEDIA RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 21, 2015

Take a bite out of rabies

World Rabies Day, Sept. 28

SARASOTA, FL— Sarasota County health officials remind pet owners to ensure their pets and farm animals are up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations in observance of World Rabies Day. Florida law requires that pet cats, dogs and ferrets be vaccinated against rabies to safeguard our community from this deadly disease.

Rabies is caused by a virus. Humans and other mammals can get the virus 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.

In Sarasota County, bites occur when people feed or adopt raccoons as pets or handle bats, stray dogs and feral cats. Other activities that increase the risk for bites include attempting to break up fights between pets and other animals, rescuing and assisting injured animals and walking pets late at night.

“To prevent animal bites, do not handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter. Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly,” says Tom Higginbotham, Environmental Health Director with the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County.



Keep pets under direct supervision. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Animal Services at 941-861-9500. Contact Animal Services to report unusual acting animals and to remove stray animals from your neighborhood.

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. The contact number to report an animal bite to the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) is 941-861-6133.

Additional information is available online: www.sarasotahealth.org and www.cdc.gov/rabies.

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View the complete policy at www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx



MEDIA NOTES:

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