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Governor



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State Surgeon General

## PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

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### Rabies Awareness Issued for Rabid Raccoon

**FERNANDINA** – Eugenia Ngo-Seidel, MD, MPH, Director, Nassau County Health Department, has issued a rabies awareness for Nassau County. A raccoon tested positive for rabies on January 31, 2013 after a possible exposure to a dog in the eastern region of Nassau County. In the eastern US, raccoons are the principal reservoir of rabies and primarily transmit the virus to other raccoons, followed by bats and foxes. Since January 1, 2012 thirty-two counties have reported a total of 104 animal rabies cases in the State of Florida. Raccoons accounted for 59 of these 104 cases as of December 31, 2012.

All citizens in Nassau County should be aware that rabies is present in the wild animal population. The public is asked to maintain a heightened awareness that rabies is active in Nassau County. 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 all wildlife contact should be avoided, including and especially raccoons, bats, bobcats and foxes.

Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans. The only treatment for human exposure to rabies is rabies-specific immune globulin and rabies immunization. If treatment is started soon after the exposure, it almost always protects the person from the disease.

The following advice is issued:

- All pets should have current rabies immunizations.
- Avoid contact with all wildlife, especially raccoons, bats, bobcats and foxes.
- All persons with any unusual exposure incident, or bites, with a wild animal should contact the Nassau County Health Department.
- For general questions pertaining to animals and rabies contact Nassau County Animal Control (for the Yulee, Callahan and Hilliard areas) at (904) 491-7440 or the Nassau County Humane Society (for Fernandina Beach) at (904) 491-0122.
- Secure outside garbage in covered containers and do not leave pet food outside. This attracts other animals.
- Keep garage doors closed and fenced in areas secure.
- For questions regarding the health of an animal, contact a veterinarian.
- Veterinarian staff and animal control staff should be alert for animals encountered with signs suspicious for rabies and contact the Nassau County Health Department.

For further information, go to the Florida Department of Health website:

<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/medicine/rabies/rabies-index.html> or contact the Nassau County Health Department, Environmental Health Program, Michael Godwin Environmental Manager, at 904-548-1830, ext 5271, or Kim Geib, MSN, ARNP, at 904-548-1800, ext 5204.

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