

September 5, 2018

HEALTH OFFICIALS ISSUE RABIES ADVISORY

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GREEN COVE SPRINGS – The Florida Department of Health in Clay County issued a rabies advisory for the Doctors Lake area in Orange Park. This is in response to a feral cat that tested positive to rabies on September 4, 2018.

All residents and visitors in Clay County 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 Clay County. Advisories 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 advisory.

The recent rabies advisory is for 60 days. The center of the rabies advisory is at Doctors Lake area of Orange Park, and includes the following boundaries in Clay County:

- North of Doctors Lake
- West of the St. Johns River
- East of Blanding Blvd.

An animal with rabies could infect other wild 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, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats and coyotes. 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. Appropriate treatment started soon after the exposure, will protect an exposed person from the disease.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- 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 and contact Clay County Services at 904-269-6342.
- Call your local animal control agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood.
- **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.
- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and report the injury to the Florida Department of Health in Clay County at 904-529-2800, option 5, then option 1.

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 Clay County at 904-529-2800, or Clay County Animal Control at 904-269-6342.

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