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## HEALTH OFFICIALS ISSUE RABIES ALERT

**Contact:**

Emily Cason

[Emily.Cason@flhealth.gov](mailto:Emily.Cason@flhealth.gov)

904-875-6100



**Nassau County** – The Florida Department of Health in Nassau County (DOH-Nassau) issued a rabies alert for northwest Nassau County. This is in response to a cat that tested positive on January 18, 2019.

All residents and visitors in Nassau 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 Nassau County. Alerts are designed to increase awareness to the public. Please be aware that rabies activities can also occur outside the alert area.

This rabies alert is for 60 days. The center of the rabies alert is at Kings Ferry, and includes the following boundaries in Nassau County:

- St. Mary's River to the North,
- Prospect Landing, Murree Road and U.S. Hwy 1 to the West,
- Lessie Road to the East,
- W. County Road 108 to the South.

An animal with rabies could infect 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:

- Call your local animal control agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood. Nassau Humane Society is the animal control agency for the City of Fernandina Beach, and Nassau County Animal Services is the agency for all other parts of the county.
- 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 Nassau County Animal Services at 904-530-6150, or the Nassau Humane Society at 904-491-0122 for incidents in the city of Fernandina Beach.
- Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.

- Outdoor feeding can attract animals such as feral cats, raccoons, and coyotes. 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.

For further information on rabies, go to <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html>, or contact DOH-Nassau at 904-875-6100.

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