

September 19, 2018

HEALTH OFFICIALS ISSUE RABIES ALERT

FOURTH FOX TESTS POSITIVE



Contact:

Crystal Steele

Crystal.Steele@flhealth.gov

850-892-8021

Walton County, Fla.— Today, the Florida Department of Health in Walton County (DOH-Walton) received confirmation of a fourth fox that has tested positive for rabies. The location of the four foxes were, two in the Windswept area of Freeport and two in North Walton. Therefore, the rabies alert will be extended for another 60 days.

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

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:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets and at-risk livestock.
- Do not allow your pets to run free. Follow leash laws by keeping pets and livestock secured on your property. If your pet or livestock are bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact Walton Animal Services at 850-892-8682.
- Support animal control in efforts to reduce feral and stray animal populations.
- Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.
- **Do not** handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with outdoor food sources such as uncovered trash 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 DOH- Walton at 850-892-8021.

DOH-Walton in partnership with Walton County Animal Control, the Walton County Sheriff's Office and Alaqua Animal Refuge will be providing a low-cost rabies clinic on Saturday, September 29, 2018 from 8:00 – 12:00 at the Freeport Community Center.

For further information on rabies, go to <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html>, or contact DOH- Walton at 850-892-8021.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department 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.