

News Releases

DHEC News Release: Oconee County residents advised to stay away from wild animals; vaccinate pets against rabies

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 27, 2012

Oconee County residents advised to stay away from wild animals; vaccinate pets against rabies

COLUMBIA, S.C. - An Oconee County man who was exposed to rabies by a raccoon is under the care of a physician after the animal tested positive for rabies, the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control reported today.

"The man was exposed to the raccoon while clearing some property in the town of Walhalla," said Sue Ferguson of DHEC's Bureau of Environmental Health.

Ferguson said once the rabies virus reaches the brain, the disease is fatal to humans and animals, so the man is receiving preventive inoculations.

According to Ferguson, anyone bitten, scratched or otherwise exposed to the saliva of a rabid animal must undergo immediate measures to stop the virus from reaching the brain.

"Avoid wild animals acting tame and tame animals acting wild," Ferguson said. "About 400 South Carolinians must undergo preventive treatment for rabies every year, with most exposures from being bitten or scratched by a rabid or suspected rabid animal. Wild animals carry the disease most often, but domestic pets can contract rabies as well.

"Therefore, to protect both the pets and their owners, residents should make sure their pets are regularly vaccinated against the disease. State law requires that all pets be vaccinated against rabies.

"If you think you have been exposed to the rabies virus through a bite, scratch or the saliva of a possibly infected animal, immediately wash the affected area with plenty of soap and water," she said. "Then be sure to get medical attention and report the incident to DHEC."

This is the first confirmed rabid animal in Oconee County in 2012. Last year, there was one rabid animal confirmed in the county. In 2011, there were 107 confirmed cases of rabies in animals in South Carolina. So far this year, there have been 15 confirmed cases in animals in the state.

For more information about rabies, see DHEC's webpage at:

/Health/DiseasesandConditions/InfectiousDiseases/InsectAnimalBorne/Rabies/ <<http://www.scdhec.gov/rabies>> or contact DHEC's Oconee County Environmental Health Office at (864) 638-4185. The national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's webpage about rabies can be found at: **<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies>** <<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies>>.

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