

## News Releases

# DHEC News Release: Spartanburg County residents advised to vaccinate pets against rabies, avoid stray animals

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 19, 2012

## Spartanburg County residents advised to vaccinate pets against rabies, avoid stray animals

COLUMBIA, S.C. - A Spartanburg County woman who was bitten by a stray cat 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 stray cat tried to run inside the woman's house, which is near Lyman," said Sue Ferguson of DHEC's Bureau of Environmental Health, "and when she blocked it from entering, the cat bit her on the foot. Now, she must undergo treatment to prevent the spread of rabies through her body."

According to Ferguson, once the rabies virus reaches the brain, the disease is fatal to humans and animals. 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. The woman is receiving preventive inoculations.

"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. Stray animals should be avoided as they can carry the disease."

"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," Ferguson said. "Then be sure to get medical attention and report the incident to DHEC."

This is the first confirmed rabid animal in Spartanburg County and the fifth statewide in 2012. In 2011, there were five in the county and 106 statewide.

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

**/Health/DiseasesandConditions/InfectiousDiseases/InsectAnimalBorne/Rabies/** <<http://www.scdhec.gov/rabies>> or

contact DHEC's Spartanburg County Environmental Health Office (864) 596-2227. 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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