

February 2, 2022

HEALTH OFFICIALS ISSUE RABIES ALERT



Contact:

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Okeechobee, Fla. — The Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County (FDOH-Okeechobee) issued a rabies alert for the Northwest Region (The Prairie) in Okeechobee County. This is in response to a skunk that tested positive for rabies on 2/1/2022.

All residents and visitors in Okeechobee 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 Okeechobee County. Alerts are designed to increase awareness to the public, but they should not get a false sense of security to areas that have not been named as under an alert.

The recent rabies alert is for 60 days. The center of the rabies alert is in the Northwest area of Okeechobee County, The Prairie, and includes the following boundaries in Okeechobee County:

- Five Mile Slough Trailhead to Audubon Trailhead to East end of River Trail and to the Primitive Campsite

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 Okeechobee County Animal Control (863) 357-3225.
- 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 Okeechobee County at (863) 462-5800.

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 Okeechobee County at (863) 462-5800, or Okeechobee County Animal Control (863) 357-3225.

The Department works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

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About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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