

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For More Information Contact

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NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT URGES PET VACCINATIONS AGAINST RABIES

(Christiansburg, Virginia) – The New River Health District is urging people to “Protect the Ones You Love. Vaccinate Your Pets.” This important message is the focus of this year’s Rabies Awareness Week, September 27-October 3.

“Rabies is endemic in the New River Valley, so vaccinating companion animals--such as dogs and cats--against rabies for their protection as well as the protection of other family members is very important,” said Jody Hershey, M.D., M.P.H., director of the New River Health District.

Dr. Hershey further explained, “Unfortunately, animal bites occur often. Our health departments have investigated 435 possible rabies exposures to date in 2010, and 601 possible rabies exposures were investigated in 2009.”

In the New River Health District (city of Radford and the counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski), 14 animals (seven raccoons, five skunks, one fox, one cat) have been confirmed to be rabid to date in 2010 and 14 animals (eight raccoons, two skunks, one fox, two cats, one bobcat) were confirmed rabid in 2009.

“The rabies virus is shed in the saliva of animals sick with the virus, so any animal bite should be taken seriously,” stresses Dr. Hershey. “If an animal bites you, wash the wound immediately. Call your physician, local health department or animal control agency immediately.” Likewise, if your pet is bitten by a wild animal, contact your veterinarian or local health department immediately.

The New River Health District strongly advises that people take the following steps to prevent families and pets from being exposed to rabies:

- Vaccinate all cats, dogs and ferrets against rabies and keep them up to date!
- Avoid contact with wild animals or stray cats and dogs.
- Do not feed wild animals or stray cats and dogs.
- Report stray animals to your local animal control agency.
- Eliminate outdoor food sources around the home.
- Keep pets confined to your property or walk them on a leash.

During Rabies Awareness Week, some veterinarians may be offering low cost rabies vaccinations. Check to see if your pet’s doctor is participating. State law requires all dogs and cats over the age of four months to be vaccinated against rabies. Vaccines can be given as early as three months and one product is approved for kittens at eight weeks. Dog licenses are required throughout the State and some communities require licenses for cats.

Among the activities planned during Rabies Awareness Week in the New River Health District

(More)

are events at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine complex off Duckpond Drive on the Virginia Tech campus on Saturday, September 25:

- Annual Dog Wash, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$10 bath and \$5 nail clipping and ear cleaning
- World Rabies Day Event, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., games, education, wildlife display, merchandise sales, giveaways, information on reduced-cost vaccines, rabies presentations
- 5k Fun Walk/Run, 1 p.m. (Registration opens at 12 noon), \$5 per human-dog team, prizes awarded to winners and best costumes

Additionally, a total of 500 free one-year rabies vaccines for dogs and cats will be administered on Monday, September 27 and Tuesday, September 28, 5-7 p.m., at the following locations:

- Companion Animal Clinic, 201 South Hill Dr., Blacksburg, 540-552-6800
- Town & Country Veterinary Clinic, 1605 N. Franklin St., Christiansburg, 540-382-5042
- West End Animal Clinic, 829 Second St., Radford, 540-731-1111
- Dublin Animal Hospital, 5720 Bagging Plant Rd., Dublin, 540-674-4706

For more information on these activities, please contact Cassie Wedd at cassiewedd@gmail.com.

For more information on rabies, log onto the Virginia Department of Health's Web site at www.vdh.virginia.gov/Epidemiology/DEE/Rabies/ or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at www.cdc.gov/rabies/.

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