

## **Rabies Alert: Protecting Rowan County Residents and Their Pets**

Rowan County Public Health and Rowan County Animal Enforcement are committed to raising awareness about the deadly threat of rabies and the critical steps individuals should take to safeguard themselves, their families, and their pets.

Recently, a kitten in Landis and a racoon in China Grove tested positive for rabies. Both of these cases led to human exposure, leading those who were affected to begin post-exposure vaccinations. These incidents highlight the ongoing risk of rabies in our community and the importance of vigilance—especially when introducing new animals into the home or encountering wildlife.

### **Understanding Rabies and Its Impact**

Rabies is a viral disease that affects the central nervous system and is always fatal once symptoms appear. It is primarily transmitted through the saliva of infected animals, typically via bites or scratches. While wild animals such as raccoons, bats, skunks, and foxes are common carriers, domestic animals can also become infected, especially if they are unvaccinated or exposed to wildlife.

Signs of rabies in domestic animals may include:

- Daytime activity in animals normally active at night
- Overly aggressive or unusually passive behavior
- Staggering, weakness, or paralysis
- Changes in vocalization (e.g., barking, meowing)
- Inability to eat or drink
- Drooling or frothing at the mouth
- Convulsions

If your pet exhibits any of these symptoms, do not attempt to handle the animal. Contact Rowan County Animal Enforcement immediately.

### **Feeding Wildlife Can Be Dangerous**

Feeding or approaching wild animals—even those that appear friendly—can disrupt their natural behavior and increase the risk of rabies transmission. It also encourages wildlife to enter residential areas, putting both humans and pets at risk.

To reduce exposure:

- Do not feed or handle wild animals
- Secure garbage and pet food
- Keep yards clean and free of debris
- Seal entry points to homes and attics

## **What to Do If You're Exposed**

If you or a loved one is bitten or scratched by a wild or unknown animal:

- Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water
- Seek medical attention immediately
- Contact Rowan County Animal Enforcement to report the incident and capture the animal if possible

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)—a series of rabies vaccinations—can prevent the virus from progressing if administered promptly.

## **Protecting Your Pets**

Vaccinating pets is one of the most effective ways to prevent rabies. The Rowan County Animal Shelter now offers rabies vaccinations by appointment for just \$10. Call 704-216-7768 to schedule.

### **Additional tips:**

- Keep pets up-to-date on rabies vaccinations
- Supervise pets when outdoors
- Avoid introducing stray or wild animals into your home

## **Reporting and Resources**

To report a potentially rabid animal:

- Call Rowan County Animal Enforcement at 704-216-7768 during business hours (Monday–Friday, 11 AM–4 PM and Saturday 9:30AM-3PM)
- Call 911 after hours

*This press release has been prepared by the Rowan County Public Health Department through interdepartmental collaboration, with the purpose of informing the public about current or emerging public health matters. For more information, please contact the Public Information Officer (PIO).*

### **PIO Contact:**

Courtney Meece

(704) 216-8818

Courtney.Meece@rowancountync.gov