

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Celeste Philip, MD, MPH**  
Surgeon General and Secretary

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

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To: Miami-Dade County Healthcare Providers and Infection Control Professionals

From: Reynald Jean, MD, MPH, MSN, AGPCNP-BC, Director  
Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade  
Epidemiology, Disease Control and Immunization Services

Date: September 20, 2018

### Health Advisory: Rabies Alert

#### Background

On May 18, 2018, the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County issued the first Rabies Alert for 2018. This alert was in response to a raccoon that tested positive at the public health laboratory. The area where the raccoon was found has the following boundaries: SW 152nd Street to the North, SW 187th Street to the South, SW 117th Avenue to the East, SW 137<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the West. Each rabies alert is for a period of 60 days from the issuance of the alert.

To date, five additional raccoons have tested positive for rabies resulting in six rabid raccoons within the same boundaries. In the previous five years, only one rabid bat was identified in 2016 and two rabid raccoons were identified in 2017.

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. In the past 10 years, cats were reported with rabies more frequently than dogs in Florida. Most of these cats were free-roaming animals.

#### Clinical signs

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 initiated soon after the exposure, will protect an exposed person from the disease. Rabies exposure occurs when there is a bite, scratch, or mucosal or open wound contact with saliva, cerebral spinal fluid, tears, or nervous tissue from a rabid vector.

Rabies in humans affects multiple organ systems and most characteristically presents as a viral encephalitis. With few exceptions, clinical illness with this disease results in death. The likelihood that a person will develop rabies depends upon a variety of factors including the amount of virus inoculated, virus strain, host immunity, location of inoculation, number of nerve endings at the site of the exposure, and the timing and procedures used for the administration of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).

#### Guidance for Health Care providers

- Rabies PEP Decision Tree - [http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/\\_documents/rabies-professional-resources/6-decision-tree-for-health-care-providers.pdf](http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/_documents/rabies-professional-resources/6-decision-tree-for-health-care-providers.pdf)

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**Accredited Health Department**  
Public Health Accreditation Board

- Rabies PEP Administration Guidance and Schedule - [http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/\\_documents/rabies-professional-resources/7-rabies-pep-administration-guidance-and-schedule.pdf](http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/_documents/rabies-professional-resources/7-rabies-pep-administration-guidance-and-schedule.pdf)

### Reporting

Suspect human rabies and animal bites to humans by cats, dogs, bats, skunks, foxes, raccoons, coyotes, and other mammals and wild carnivores **must be reported** to the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade immediately 24/7 by calling 305-470-5660 and faxing the completed Animal Bites Report Form to fax number 786-732-8714.

### Attachments to the Health Advisory

1. Rabies PEP Decision Tree for Health Care Providers
2. Rabies PEP Administration Guidance and Schedule for Health Care Providers
3. Animal Bite Report Form

### More information

- Rabies, Florida Department of Health - <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/professionals.html>
- Rabies, CDC - <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>
- Programs for Uninsured and Underinsured Patients, CDC - [https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/medical\\_care/programs.html](https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/medical_care/programs.html)