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SEARCH

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

35 Woodfin Street
Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 250-5000

Rabid Cat Found In UNC-A Area

Health Officials at the Buncombe County Department of Health announced Friday, January 14 that a cat in the UNCA area was confirmed to have rabies. The cat, a short-haired, dark gray, very small female, with green eyes was taken in by someone in the community and was discovered to have rabies a few days later.

Department of Health staff is working to identify people and animals in the affected area who may have been exposed to the rabid cat. Flyers are being distributed to homes of those who are most at risk of exposure.

Sue Ellen Morrison, Disease Control Manager for the Buncombe County Department of Health states, "Any person who may have come in contact with this cat between December 30th and January 6th should call their doctor immediately. They may also call the Disease Control Division of the Department of Health at 250-5109 for an exposure evaluation." People living in this area should also be aware of exposure to any other animal that may have been behaving unusually. The rabies virus is usually transmitted through a bite from the animal or from contact with saliva that enters the eyes, nose, mouth or broken skin.

According to Morrison, "Rabies is a serious and preventable disease. It is important to prevent exposure to the rabies virus whenever possible. Once an exposure has occurred prompt treatment is essential. Rabies is fatal without this treatment."

Residents with a concern about their pet's exposure to this cat or exposure to other rabid animals in the area, should call their veterinarian immediately or REACH of Asheville, animal emergency facility at 665-4399.

Buncombe County Department of Health makes the following recommendations to the general public:

- Vaccinate your pets regularly according to North Carolina Law.
• Keep children and pets away from wild and strange animals.
• Don't allow pets to run at large.
• If your pet comes in contact with a wild or strange animal, avoid contact with both animals. For City of Asheville residents call the Asheville Police Department at 252-110. Residents in Buncombe County should call the Buncombe County Sheriff's office at 250-6670.
• Make sure trash can lids are on tightly and pet food is not left outside.
• For any animal bite, the wound should be cleaned thoroughly (for at least 10 minutes). Then contact your doctor or Buncombe County Health Center at 250-5109.

Rabies is a disease caused by a virus that is spread through the saliva of an infected animal. When contracted by humans, rabies is fatal unless early treatment is sought. There is no cure once symptoms develop, so immediate treatment is important to prevent the disease. In North Carolina rabies is most common in raccoons, skunks, and foxes, but has also been found in dogs, cats, horses, cattle, bats and other animals.