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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

PREVENTION IS THE BEST PROTECTION FROM RABIES

As families plan holiday outings in parks and preserves during the winter holidays, it's important to educate the community about avoiding contact with any wild animal.

The Pinellas County Health Department and Pinellas County Animal Services are reminding county residents that a bite, scratch or contact with the paws or saliva of an infected animal can transmit rabies.

This disease is nearly always fatal, but can be prevented if an exposed person is treated early with a vaccine regimen.

Pinellas children and adults who handled a bat recently were given a series of vaccines as a precaution, as was another person who received a scratch from a coyote. Bats, raccoons and coyotes are frequent carriers of rabies and should never be touched by anyone other than trained handlers.

Children and adults should avoid contact with wildlife because prevention is the best protection from rabies. To control the spread of rabies, follow these guidelines:

***Keep your pets' rabies vaccinations current to protect them from contact with wild animals.

***Never feed, pet or interact with wildlife or strays.

***Report animal bites or scratches to Animal Services.

***Keep pets at home in a fenced yard or on a leash. If a stray or wild animal bites your pet, call your vet immediately.

***Never "adopt" a wild animal or bring them into your home. Call Pinellas County Animal Services, (727) 582-2600, or an animal rescue agency for assistance.

The Pinellas County Health Department has information about rabies and links to additional information from the Florida Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Go to <http://pinellashealth.com/RabiesHelpfulLinks.asp>.

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