

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **World Rabies Day is September 28**

LYNCHBURG, VA. – With World Rabies Day approaching on September 28, the Central Virginia Health District wants to make residents more aware that rabies is present in Virginia and explain what they can do to prevent the spread of rabies.

Rabies is caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system and is lethal if proper medical care is not given following an exposure to the virus. The most common source of exposure to rabies is a bite by a rabid animal. Rabies may also be transmitted by saliva from a rabid animal coming into contact with open wounds, the mouth, eyes, or nose.

Did you know that in the last 12 months (since October 1, 2023) 28 animals in the Central Virginia Health District tested positive for rabies? Six of those animals exposed one or more persons to rabies and 20 exposed one or more domestic animals to the virus.

### **Steps to Prevent the Spread of Rabies:**

To protect pets and their owners from rabies, Virginia law requires that all dogs and cats four months of age and older be vaccinated for rabies by a licensed veterinarian, and that vaccinations be kept current.

The Central Virginia Health District is reminding the public to avoid contact with bats, feral cats, stray dogs and wild animals, particularly in the area where the rabid raccoon was found. See additional precautions below.

### **Additional Steps to Protect Against Rabies Exposure:**

- Do not feed stray animals. Avoid wild animals, especially raccoons, bats, foxes and skunks. Feed your pets indoors and do not let them wander.
- Make sure your pets are vaccinated against rabies and their shots are up to date. By law, all dogs, cats and ferrets must be vaccinated against rabies.
- Teach children to avoid contact with wild animals and pets they are not familiar with.
- Do not handle sick, injured or dead animals.
- Keep wild animals out of homes by capping chimneys with screens and blocking openings in attics, cellars and porches. Ensure trash cans have tight fitting lids.
- If you observe any stray animals in the area, contact the local animal control for assistance. Please do not try to trap or handle stray and wild animals.