

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM RABIES

(PETERSBURG, Va.)- In recognition of Rabies Awareness Week the Crater District Health Departments are reminding residents to take precautions while dealing with wild and stray animals. The District has received six confirmed rabies cases so far this year.

According to Tim Jones Environmental Health Manager for the Crater District Health Departments, "Rabies is a fatal disease. It can be prevented with vaccination, but once symptoms begin, it cannot be cured."

The Crater District Health Departments stress that any resident who may have been exposed, or has pets that may have been exposed, to any wild animals to immediately contact the local health department and/or Animal Control offices in the localities in which they reside.

The Crater District Health Departments encourage people take the following steps to prevent families and pets from being exposed to rabies:

- Vaccinate all cats, dogs and ferrets against rabies and keep them up to date!
- Avoid contact with wild animals or stray cats and dogs.
- Do not feed wild animals or stray cats and dogs.
- Report stray animals to your local animal control agency.
- Eliminate outdoor food sources around the home.
- Keep your family pets confined to your property or walk them on a leash.
- If you are bitten by an animal or exposed to rabies, wash the wound thoroughly with lots of warm water and soap and seek medical attention immediately.

State law requires all dogs and cats over the age of four months to be vaccinated against rabies. Vaccines can be given as early as three months and one product is approved for kittens at eight weeks. Dog licenses are required throughout the state and some communities require licenses for cats.

For more information on rabies, log onto the Virginia Department of Health's Web site at www.vdh.virginia.gov/Epidemiology/DEE/Rabies/, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>, or call Crater Health District at 804-862-8942.

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