

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CENTRAL VIRGINIA HEALTH DISTRICT AND LOCAL VETERINARIANS URGE PET VACCINATIONS AGAINST RABIES

(Lynchburg, Va.) – The Central Virginia Health District and local vets are urging people to “Protect the Ones You Love. Vaccinate Your Pets.” This important message is the focus of this year’s Rabies Awareness Week, September 27-October 3.

“Vaccinating companion animals, such as dogs and cats, against rabies for their protection as well as the protection of other family members is very important,” said State Public Health Veterinarian, Julia Murphy.

In the Central Virginia Health District (counties and cities of Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell, and Lynchburg) the total number of rabies cases confirmed to date in 2010 was 20, a decrease from the 22 cases confirmed by this date in 2009.

“The rabies virus is shed in the saliva of animals sick with the virus, so any animal bite should be taken seriously,” stresses Dr. Murphy. “If an animal bites you, wash the wound immediately. Call your physician, local health department or animal control agency immediately.” Likewise, if your pet is bitten by a wild animal, contact your veterinarian or local health department immediately.

The Central Virginia Health District strongly advises that 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 pets confined to your property or walk them on a leash.

During Rabies Awareness Week, some veterinarians may be offering low cost rabies vaccinations. Check to see if your pet’s doctor is participating. 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 Central Virginia Health District at 434-947-6781.

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