



## Press Release

### Rabies Positive Raccoon Found in Macon County

Macon County has identified an additional rabies positive raccoon. A citizen reported a potentially rabid raccoon to Macon County Animal Services, the animal was then brought back to the shelter, euthanized, and sent for testing. There is no known exposure to this animal. The animal was picked up in the Cowee Township of the county.

While rabies is endemic to bats, skunks, and raccoons in North Carolina, the best prevention is the rabies vaccination. In light of recent rabies positive animals, Macon County Animal Services will be sponsoring low-cost rabies vaccination clinics at local schools on March 27<sup>th</sup> and April 10<sup>th</sup>. More details can be found on Macon County Animal Services Facebook page. Macon County residents are encouraged to ensure that their animals are up-to-date on all vaccinations.

Macon County Animal Services Section Administrator, Dr. Villiard, said of the incident, "While rabies is endemic is skunks, raccoons and bats in North Carolina, the recent increase in the number of detected cases in Macon County does raise concern for our pets. We are actively coordinating with our local veterinarians to schedule low-cost rabies vaccine clinics, to make sure that the pets of Macon County are protected."

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system in humans and other mammals. A person may contract rabies through a bite, scratch, or saliva from an infected animal. Potential rabies exposure should never be taken lightly; left untreated, rabies is fatal.

Animals do not have to be aggressive or behaving erratically to have the rabies virus. Changes in any animal's normal behavior can be early signs of rabies. Any exposure to these animals should be reported to Macon County Animal Services, so that the animal can be located and tested for rabies. Macon County pet owners should also be sure to check their pet's last rabies vaccination is up-to-date, to prevent a possible rabies infection.

In addition to keeping your pets vaccinated, pet owners should keep cats and ferrets indoors and keep dogs under direct supervision, by spaying or neutering their pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or vaccinated regularly, and call animal control to remove all stray animals from their neighborhood since these animals may be unvaccinated or ill.

Every day citizens should also be sure to prevent rabies in themselves by leaving wildlife alone, wash animal bites and scratches with soap and water, vaccinating pets, and contacting your healthcare provider immediately after you are bitten, scratched, or otherwise exposed to an animal who may be positive for rabies. Rabies in people is preventable through prompt medical care.

Animal Services is open on Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 4:00pm, closing daily for lunch from 12:00pm to 1:00pm. Due to COVID-19, appointments are required, and can be made the same day. Macon County Animal Services can be reached at 828-349-2106.

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