



# Press Release

## Rabies Positive Raccoon Found in Macon County

Macon County has identified a rabies positive raccoon. The raccoon was turned over to Macon County Animal Services after it was killed following an interaction with a citizen's dogs. The dogs have returned home and will remain under observation and quarantine for a minimum of 45 days. All dogs received care through Animal Services and partner organizations, including a rabies booster vaccine.

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. Bats, skunks, and raccoons are the most common carriers of rabies in North Carolina. 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.

Macon County Animal Services Section Administrator, Dr. Villiard, said of the incident, "Rabies can be a serious disease, that can leave animals vulnerable to a painful death. Thankfully, we have a simple and inexpensive prevention tool available to us in the form of a vaccine. Pet owners should take the responsibility of getting their pets vaccinated and making sure they are up-to-date on vaccines as well."

In addition to keeping your pets vaccinated against rabies, pet owners should maintain control of their pets by keeping cats and ferrets indoors and keeping 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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