

# Carroll County Health Department

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**Public Health**  
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## Feral cat in rural southern Westminster found positive for rabies

Westminster, MD (June 6, 2018) – The Carroll County Health Department announced that a young feral cat found near Frizzell and Bloom Roads in a rural area of southern Westminster was found to be positive for the rabies virus. The cat was an orange short-hair, about 6 months old. An individual who was bitten and scratched by the cat will be treated for rabies with a series of shots.

“Rabies exposure occurs through bites and scratches or saliva from the animal getting into a person’s eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound,” said Joe Mancuso, Rabies Program Manager at the Health Department. “We do a thorough risk assessment with every person who was potentially exposed to rabies through interactions with wild or stray animals.”

Anyone who may have interacted with this cat who thinks that they or their pet could have been exposed to rabies through bites, scratches, or saliva can call the Health Department at 410-876-1884 for more information and a risk assessment.

Rabies is a serious disease transmitted in the saliva of an infected animal. To date, 94 animals have been diagnosed with rabies in Maryland in 2018, including raccoons, bats, and cats. All mammals are susceptible to rabies, including wildlife and domestic species such as dogs and cats. Animals with rabies may act normally during the early stages of the disease, making it difficult to know the animal is infected. As the disease progresses, animals often show changes in behavior. Wild animals may act very docile and domestic animals may become aggressive. Rabid animals may stagger, drool, or become paralyzed.

When a person is bitten by or exposed to the saliva of a rabid animal, the disease is prevented by a rabies vaccine series administered over a 14-day period and a dose of rabies immunoglobulin given at the beginning of the series.

Rabies can be prevented by being careful around wild and stray animals. “Observe wildlife and animals you don’t know from a distance, and keep your pets vaccinated,” advised Mancuso.

“The Health Department offers two low-cost rabies vaccination clinics each year to help county residents keep their pets vaccinated.”

To keep yourself, your family, and your pets safe from rabies:

- Do not approach, handle, or feed wild or stray animals.
- Have your dogs, cats, and ferrets vaccinated against rabies and keep their vaccinations up-to-date. The next Health Department low-cost rabies vaccination clinic will be on **September 23<sup>rd</sup> from 2-4 pm at the Ag Center in Westminster.**
- Do not leave pets outside unattended or allow them to roam free.
- Cover garbage cans tightly and do not leave pet food outside.
- Teach children to stay away from wild animals and any animals that they do not know.
- Prevent bats from entering your home by using window screens and chimney caps. Bats found in the home should be safely collected, if possible, and tested for rabies.
- If a wild or stray animal is sick, injured, or acting strangely and is in your living space, call animal control (410-848-4810).
- If you or your pet have been bitten or scratched by a wild or stray animal, wash the area with soap and water for several minutes. Keep your pet away from other people and pets. Then call your physician or veterinarian and contact the Health Department (410-871-1884).

For more information: <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Pages/rabies.aspx>

The Carroll County Health Department’s website can be found at <http://cchd.maryland.gov> and you can follow them on Facebook.

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