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## HEALTH OFFICIALS ISSUE RABIES ALERT



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**Merritt Island, FL** – The Florida Department of Health in Brevard County (DOH-Brevard) issued a rabies alert for the Friday Road, Fern Meadows area. This is in response to an adopted stray cat that tested positive on 01/17/2019.

All residents and visitors in Brevard County should be aware that rabies is present in the wild animal population and domestic animals are at risk if not vaccinated. The public is asked to maintain a heightened awareness that rabies is active in Brevard County. Alerts are designed to increase awareness to the public. Please be aware that rabies activities can also occur outside the alert area.

This rabies alert is for 60 days. The center of the rabies alert is at Cressa Circle, Fern Meadows in Cocoa, and includes the following boundaries in Brevard County:

- Highway 524 to the North and West
- Interstate 95 to the East
- Pluckebaum Road to the South

An animal with rabies could infect domestic animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies. All domestic animals should be vaccinated against rabies and all wildlife contact should be avoided, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats, and coyotes. Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans. The only treatment for human exposure to rabies is rabies specific immune globulin and rabies immunization. Appropriate treatment started soon after the exposure will protect an exposed person from the disease.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets and at-risk livestock.
- Do not allow your pets to run free. Follow leash laws by keeping pets and livestock secured on your property. If your pet or livestock are bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact BCSO Animal Services at 321-633-2024.
- Support animal control in efforts to reduce feral and stray animal populations.
- Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.

- **Do not** handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with outdoor food sources such as uncovered trash or litter.
- **Never** adopt wild animals or bring them into your home.
- Teach children **never** to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas, where they might come in contact with people and pets.
- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and report the injury to Brevard County Animal Services at 321-633-2024.

For further information on rabies, go to <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html>, or contact DOH-Brevard at 321-6334-6337, or Brevard County Animal services at 321-633-2024.

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