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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **HEALTH OFFICIALS REMIND RESIDENTS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM RABIES**

**ST. AUGUSTINE, FL** - St. Johns County Health Department officials today emphasized the importance of rabies awareness and prevention.

Rabies is a virus that attacks the brain of warm-blooded animals, including people. When an animal is sick with rabies, the virus is found in the saliva and can be passed to another animal or a person, usually through a bite. Animals with rabies may show unusual/atypical behavior. They may be aggressive, attacking for no apparent reason. Wild animals may act tame or unafraid of humans. They may not be able to eat, drink or swallow, and may drool. Infected animals may stagger or become paralyzed. Rabies will kill most mammals.

### **To protect yourself, your family and your pets from rabies:**

- Vaccinate your dogs, cats, ferrets, and horses against rabies.
- Avoid contact with wild or stray animals.
- Never feed wild or stray animals.
- Do not allow your pets to run free.

Since the 1980's, there have been more reported rabid cats than rabid dogs. For this reason, please do not encourage colonies of stray cats, as they may carry rabies and expose you and your loved ones to this deadly virus.

### **If you are bitten, or scratched by an animal, you should:**

- Immediately scrub the wound with soap and water for 5 - 10 minutes
- Get a complete description of the animal and its location
- Go to the nearest emergency room or your health care provider.
- Call the St. Johns County (SJC) Animal Control office at 904-209-0746 with the animal's description and location.
- If the animal dies, be careful not to damage the head, and avoid further contact with the animal even when it is dead. Contact SJC Animal Control at 904-209-0746.

If you are bitten by a high risk animal and the animal is not found, or if it is found to be rabid, you will receive a series of shots over a 28 day period to prevent you from getting rabies. Due to the seriousness of this illness, it is imperative that every citizen take the responsibility to protect themselves by following the proper precautions listed above.

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***Our Mission:** Promote, protect and improve the health of all people in Florida.*

***Our Vision:** A healthier future for the people of Florida.*

***Our Values:** - Integrity; Commitment to Service; Respect; Excellence; Accountability; Teamwork; Empowerment -*



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