



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KILL DATE: June 6, 2008

Rabies Detected in Livingston County

HOWELL, Michigan. - (May 29, 2008) (Livingston County Department of Public Health) –

The Livingston County Department of Public Health is advising all persons in the community of a recent case of rabies in a fox in Marion Township. A local resident was bit on the leg last week by this fox, which was later reported as positive for rabies by the Michigan Department of Community Health. The fox was found in a field near Mason and Dieterle Roads just west of Howell. Livingston County Public Health Officials are strongly advising any persons who may have been exposed to this animal to seek medical attention immediately. Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is highly effective in preventing rabies in people possibly exposed to a rabid animal, if administered before symptoms develop.

“We want to remind residents of the importance of having their pets and other animals vaccinated. Since a fox can travel many miles, this case of rabies shows how easy it would be for pets to come in contact with wild animals,” according to Livingston County Medical Director Dr. Donald Lawrenchuk.

This is the first case of rabies in an animal in 2008 for Livingston County. Last year there were 7 cases reported, including 5 bats, one skunk and one dog. As of May 23, 2008, the State of Michigan reported 18 animals testing positive for rabies this year, including 10 bats, 6 skunks, and 2 foxes. The Livingston County Department of Public Health is issuing this advisory to inform residents about rabies and some steps they can take to protect themselves and their animals. Some ways to protect against rabies include:

- more -

Be a responsible pet owner:

- Keep vaccinations up to date for all dogs, cats, and ferrets. This requirement is important not only to keep your pets from getting rabies, but also to provide a barrier of protection for you, if your animal is bitten by a rabid wild animal.
- Keep your pets under direct supervision so they do not come in contact with wild animals. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately.
- Call your local animal control agency if any stray domestic animals are seen in your neighborhood. They may be unvaccinated and could be infected by the disease.
- Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.

Avoid direct contact with unfamiliar animals:

- Enjoy wild animals (raccoons, skunks, foxes) from afar. **Do not** handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- **Never** adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Do not try to nurse sick animals to health.
- Teach children **never** to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. “Love your own, leave other animals alone” is a good principle for children to learn.
- 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.

Additional information about rabies and its prevention can be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov or by calling the Livingston County Department of Public Health at (517) 546-9850.

CONTACT:

Donald Lawrenchuk, Medical Director
Livingston County Department of Public Health
(517) 552-6830
dlawrenchuk@co.livingston.mi.us

Elaine Brown, PPHS Director
Livingston County Department of Public Health
(517) 552-6806
ebrown@co.livingston.mi.us

Ted Westmeier, Director/Health Officer
Livingston County Department of Public Health
(517) 552-6801
twestmeier@co.livingston.mi.us

#