



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Livingston County Rabies Advisory, May 19, 2008

HOWELL, Michigan. – May 19, 2008 (Livingston County Department of Public Health)

The Livingston County Department of Public Health (LCDPH) is advising all persons in the community on ways to prevent rabies exposure. Last year was a record-breaking year for rabies in Michigan, with 210 animals testing positive, including 199 bats, 5 skunks, 2 fox, 2 cats, one dog and one horse. As of May 8th of this year in Michigan, 5 skunks, 5 bats, and one fox have tested positive for rabies. Although Livingston County has not received any reports so far this year of rabies, last year there were 7 cases reported, including 5 bats, one skunk and one dog. LCDPH is issuing this advisory to inform residents about rabies and some steps they can take to protect themselves and their animals.

Many kinds of animals can pass rabies to people. Wild animals are much more likely to carry rabies, especially raccoons, skunks, bats, foxes, and coyotes. However, dogs, cats, cattle (cows), or any warm-blooded animal can pass rabies to people. People usually get rabies from the bite of an infected animal. Many animals, such as dogs, cats, and horses are vaccinated against rabies, but you should always wash any bite thoroughly and check with your health care provider about what to do if any animal bites you.

The 3rd full week of May is National Dog Bite Prevention Week and LCDPH wants to remind you that it is very important to talk to your doctor or health care provider right away if any animal bites you. Some ways to protect against rabies exposure include:

- Keep vaccinations up to date for all dogs, cats and ferrets. This 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 Livingston County Animal Control to remove any stray domestic animals from 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.
- 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 wild 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.

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

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