



**Marion County
Board of County Commissioners**

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PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR PETS FROM RABIES

Immediate Release

MARION COUNTY, Fla. (Sept. 14, 2011) – Rabies. Though the word probably invokes images of raccoons and bats foaming at the mouth, your sweet kitty, friendly dog, calm horse or even you can contract the disease if bitten by a rabid animal.

Rabies is caused by a virus that's spread through exposure to a rabid animal's saliva or nervous tissue and is nearly always fatal if not immediately treated. Worldwide, more than 55,000 people die from rabies every year, according to the World Health Organization. World Rabies Day is Sept. 28, and Marion County Animal Services and the Marion County Health Department want to help you protect your pets, yourself and others.

Under Florida law, any pet more than three months old must receive a rabies vaccine and county license. Marion County Animal Services makes it easy to comply with the law and avoid fines and citations; get your pet his/her rabies vaccine and license in one quick stop at the Marion County Animal Center during business hours (Tuesday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.). Rabies vaccines are available at the Animal Center on a walk-in basis for \$10. Licenses for sterilized animals are \$5 and \$35 for non-sterilized animals.

If you are bitten or scratched by a stray or unvaccinated animal, you can still take important steps to protect yourself by following these tips from the Marion County Health Department:

- Seek medical attention immediately from your healthcare provider or the Marion County Health Department.
- Call Animal Services at 352-671-8727 to report the bite.
- If you can't locate or don't know the animal that bit you, you will most likely receive a rabies vaccination as a precaution. Call the Health Department's Environmental Health Unit at 352-629-0137 for more information.

Residents should also keep these other important tips in mind to help their pets avoid rabies:

- Do not allow your pets to run free. Follow leash laws by keeping pets and livestock secured on your property.
- Never feed wild or stray animals and avoid attracting them with outdoors food sources, such as uncovered trash.
- If your animal is attacked by a wild, stray or unvaccinated animal, do not examine your pet for injuries without wearing gloves. Wash your pet with soap and water to remove saliva from the attacking animal.
- Do not let your animal come into contact with other animals or people until the situation can be handled by Animal Services or the Health Department.

To learn more about rabies vaccines for your pets, visit www.marioncountyfl.org/animalservices.htm. For information on how to protect yourself after an animal bite, contact the Marion County Health Department at 352-629-0137.

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