



## ***CHEROKEE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT***

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### PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

August 23, 2017

Murphy, NC

After recording only 2 cases of rabies in wild animals at the Health Department in the three-year period of 2014 through 2016, CCHD has found 3 confirmed cases and 2 more cases to be confirmed at the CDC in the calendar year 2017. This increase reminds us that rabies awareness needs to be revisited and safety around animals needs to be practiced.

The animals testing positive were a raccoon, a cat, and a deer. The animals to be confirmed as rabid are a raccoon and a coyote. Rabies can occur in many animals, but the ones of greatest concern in our area are dogs, cats, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, skunks, and bats. Rabies is a deadly virus that can be transmitted to humans.

Rabies causes animals to behave abnormally. This can be manifested by unsteadiness, poor vision, poor appearance, lack of fear of humans in wild animals, aggressiveness, drooling, excessive howling, refusing to eat or drink, and other symptoms.

Keep in mind the following when you and your family are out and about:

- 1) Do not approach wild animals and do not feed them. In fact, remove pet feeding stations that are accessible to wild animals.
- 2) Get and keep your pets vaccinated against rabies. Doing so can save their lives.
- 3) Be very cautious about contact with feral or stray cats and dogs. Avoid direct physical contact with bats.
- 4) Always wear gloves at a minimum when handling injured or dead animals. And, wash thoroughly with soap and water afterward.

- 5) Seek appropriate medical care if you are bitten, scratched, or have any contact with a wild animal or a stray dog or cat.

The Health Department will continue to participate in the surveillance activities for possibly rabid animals, will continue to assist and advise persons bitten, and will be glad to answer any questions you may have. The staff at CCHD are qualified and ready to help. You can call Philip Anderson, Environmental Health Specialist, at 828-360-4381.