



Alabama Veterinary Medical Association

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Protecting People, Pets and Livestock - Yesterday, Today and Always.

PRESS RELEASE

ALVMA Promotes World Rabies Day

September 24, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONTGOMERY, Ala. - The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association is hoping to raise awareness about rabies by supporting World Rabies Day, September 28, 2014. Rabies is a deadly disease and people need to realize how easily the disease can be transmitted.

"Despite the fact that there are effective Rabies vaccinations for pets, Rabies continues to be a threat due to wild animals that can be infected," says ALVMA President John Hammons, D.V.M. "Pet owners need to understand the risks involved and the need to keep their pets vaccinations current."

Formed in 2007, the Global Alliance for Rabies Control wanted to create a global opportunity to focus on rabies prevention. The ALVMA supports this effort and encourages pet owners to have their pets vaccinated. Dogs, cats, ferrets, horses and valuable livestock should be vaccinated. Distinct strains of rabies virus have been identified in raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes. Several species of insectivorous bats are also reservoirs for strains of the rabies virus. Recently, CDC researchers have suggested that feral cat colonies may also pose a rabies risk.

Some facts to consider:

- It is estimated that only about 50-60% of the dogs and 20-25% of the cats in Alabama are vaccinated for rabies.
- There were approximately 7,000 dog and cat bites in Alabama in 2012. A significant percentage of these bites result in post exposure rabies prophylaxis for the person who is bitten at a cost of from \$1,000 to \$3,000 for each exposure.
- In Alabama 39 animals tested positive for rabies in 2013, 55 were positive in 2012 and 82 were positive for the disease in 2011. Raccoons and bats are most frequently positive for rabies in Alabama.
- Rabies is caused by a virus that animals and people can get through exposure to the saliva or nervous tissue from a rabid animal and is nearly always fatal without proper postexposure treatment.
- Rabies is zoonotic, which means it can spread from animals to people.
- Rabies is 100% preventable. In most cases, preventing rabies is as simple as ensuring adequate animal vaccination and control, avoiding contact with wild animals, and educating those at risk.

If you or your pet is bitten or scratched by a wild animal, contact your physician/veterinarian immediately. The rabies virus infects the central nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death. The early symptoms of rabies in people are similar to that of many other illnesses, including fever, headache, and general weakness or discomfort. As the disease progresses more specific symptoms occur. Rabies vaccinations will protect your pets from rabies infection. Be sure your pets' vaccinations are current and take all precautions to avoid contact with any animal that may be infected.

Founded in 1907, The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association is comprised of approximately 725 veterinarians from around the state, all committed to protecting People, Pets and Livestock – Yesterday, Today and Always.

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ALVMA Public Health Committee Talking Points on Rabies

<http://www.alvma.com/?page=WorldRabiesDay>

Useful Websites:

CDC Rabies Website: www.cdc.gov/rabies

WHO Rabies Website: <http://www.who.int/rabies/en/>

NASPHV Rabies Compendium: <http://www.nasphv.org/documentsCompendia.html>

World Rabies Day Website: <http://rabiesalliance.org/world-rabies-day/>

Alabama Department of Public Health: <http://www.adph.org> (rabies in the A-Z index).