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ANOTHER CAT TESTS POSITIVE FOR RABIES, THIS TIME IN PLANT CITY

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Tampa, Fla. – A cat that lived around North Dort Street and Rowena Mays Park in the Plant City area of Hillsborough County tested positive for rabies. Preliminary investigations revealed a white and brown tabby domestic shorthair cat exposed at least one male adult. Additionally, two domestic dogs were exposed. The Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County (DOH-Hillsborough) is attempting to locate anyone who may have been exposed.

The man who was exposed was given rabies post exposure vaccines. DOH-Hillsborough recommended the exposed dogs receive a booster for rabies and the owner will be asked to quarantine them for 45 days. This means the dog should not have contact with other animals or humans outside of the household during this period.

DOH-Hillsborough will be notifying all homes and businesses within the following boundaries:

- North – Interstate 4
- South – Airport Road/Grant Street
- East – Park Road
- West – Branch Forbes/North Forbes Road

Anyone who has been bitten, scratched, or exposed to the saliva of any wild animal or an animal that is acting unusual should always report the exposure to the local health department. Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans.

People should avoid contact with any animal that lives in the wild. Some may be tempted to feed or help the animal, but it isn't worth the risk. The only definitive way to determine if an animal has rabies is a lab examination. Last year, three animals exposed ten people.

In 2018, Hillsborough County has identified six rabid animals (four cats, one bat and one raccoon) that exposed 14 people and four domestic dogs to the disease. It's clear that there are rabid animals living throughout the county and state.

An animal with rabies could infect other wild animals or domestic animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies. All domestic animals should be vaccinated against

rabies and all wildlife contact should be avoided, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats, and coyotes.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact the Hillsborough County Pet Resource Center at (813) 744-5660.
- **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.
- Teach children **never** to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- 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.
- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and report the injury to the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8059.

For further information on rabies, go to <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/index.html> or call the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8000, or (813) 744-5660.

The Department works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

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