

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KITTEN TESTED POSITIVE FOR RABIES September 21, 2017

A stray kitten found in the 2400 block of Ranger Road in Wisconsin Rapids tested positive for rabies. The kitten was found on September 1st. Anyone who has information regarding a mother cat with a litter of kittens seen in this area around this date please call the Wood County Health Department at 715-421-8911.

Rabies is a fatal disease so a person having direct contact with this animal needs to start treatment to prevent rabies as soon as possible. The kitten was adopted by a family in the 3000 block of Pioneer Drive in Wisconsin Rapids on September 3rd. Anyone having contact with this kitten needs to call the health department as well.

Rabies is a viral infection that affects the central nervous system and is almost always fatal for people and animals. "However, it is important for people to know that just being in the same building with a rabid animal does not constitute an exposure if you can rule out any physical contact with the animal," James Kazmierczak, epidemiologist with the state Division of Public Health said. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, wild animals account for more than 90% of reported rabies cases, and bats, raccoons, foxes, and skunks remain the most common sources of rabies in the U.S. Stray cats can contract rabies from these animals. Most domestic cats do not carry rabies. It is good to have a stray cat or kitten examined by a veterinarian before bringing it into your home. There is a vaccine to prevent rabies in many domestic pets.

An effective first step to prevent rabies infection is to immediately cleanse an animal bite wound or scratch with soap and water for 15 minutes, and then contact your healthcare provider and local health department. In Wisconsin, skunks and bats are the most likely animal species to carry the rabies virus, although dogs, cats, raccoons, foxes, and livestock have also been infected during the past several years. A person bitten by an animal known to be a potential carrier of rabies should safely capture the biting animal so it can be observed or tested for rabies. Animals currently vaccinated for rabies can be held for a 10 day observation period to rule out rabies. If testing is required, the head of the animal must be submitted to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. It is important that the head of the animal is not damaged.

Public health officials suggest the following precautions to minimize the spread of rabies:

- Protect your pets. Keep rabies vaccinations up-to-date for dogs, cats, and ferrets.
- Avoid contact with all wild animals, especially those acting abnormally or unusually friendly. Contact your local animal control for assistance in dealing with wild animals.
- Teach children a healthy respect for unfamiliar dogs, cats, and wild animals, including bats.
- Do not keep wild or exotic animals as pets, regardless of how young or cute they may be.
- Exclude bats from living quarters by keeping screens in good repair and by closing up any small openings that could allow them to enter.
- Contact a healthcare provider and your local health department if there is any known direct physical contact with any wild animal that is acting strangely.

For more on rabies visit www.cdc.gov/rabies or call the Wood County Health Department at 715-421-8911.