



POTENTIAL FOR RABIES EXPOSURE HIGHER IN SUMMER MONTHS

HICKORY, NC – The summer months provide a nice opportunity for families to spend more time outside but also offer the potential for exposure to wildlife and their diseases. Raccoons, skunks, foxes, and bats are known to carry rabies.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rabies virus infects the central nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death. Most pets are vaccinated regularly for protection against rabies, but people do not usually get the vaccine for this deadly disease.

The most common way rabies is transmitted is through the bite and saliva of an infected host, like a wild animal. To help prevent possible exposure to rabies infection, follow these recommendations:

- Don't feed or touch wild or stray animals
- After picnicking or camping outside, pick up food and dispose of it properly
- Watch small children while camping and hiking to ensure that they don't try to approach, touch, or feed wild animals
- Check outbuildings, cabins, and exteriors regularly to ensure bats and other wildlife are not present
- Visit Catawba County Animal Shelter or your veterinarian to keep your pet's rabies vaccinations up-to-date
- Call animal control to remove stray animals from your neighborhood since these animals may be unvaccinated or ill

Early symptoms of rabies in people include fever, headache, and general weakness or discomfort.

Call your healthcare provider or Catawba County Public Health immediately if you have been in contact with an animal and suspect that you may have been exposed to rabies.

Treatment for someone who has been exposed to rabies is a series of shots known as postexposure prophylaxis (PEP). These shots help the body's immune system destroy the disease in its early stages. Getting PEP before symptoms appear usually prevents infection.

The Catawba County Animal Shelter will hold the next of its rabies vaccination clinics on Aug. 3 at Catawba Elementary School from 10 a.m. to 12 Noon. One-year rabies vaccines are also available year round through the Catawba County Animal Shelter. The fee for the vaccine is \$5.

Located off Fairgrove Church Road behind Catawba Valley Medical Center in Hickory, N.C., Catawba County Public Health provides health and education services to eligible men, women, and children in the community. For more information, please call (828) 695-5800 or visit www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth.

"Leading the Way to a Healthier Community"