



Public Health
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Frederick County Health Department

News Release

CONTACT: Brandon Alter

301-600-3112

TTY: 800-735-2258

FCHealthDept@frederickcountymd.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Third Groundhog in Frederick City Tests Positive for Rabies

FREDERICK, MD – On Friday, October 4, 2024, the Frederick County Health Department (FCHD) was notified that a groundhog from the Willowcrest Neighborhood in Frederick City, Maryland, tested positive for the rabies virus. This is the third groundhog to test positive for rabies in a quarter mile area in the last three months. Finding this many rabid animals a short distance from each other and over a short period of time is unusual, so FCHD and Frederick County Animal Control remind residents that wildlife lives in residential areas and recommend avoiding interaction with or feeding wild animals.

Frederick County Animal Control collected the groundhog on Thursday, October 3, 2024, following a fight with a dog. Some of the infected groundhogs have shown aggression to people and pets while others have not. It is important to report bites to Animal Control, consult a health care provider when bitten, and notify the FCHD's Community Health Services Office at 301-600-3342. If any pets had contact with any wild animal, consult with your veterinarian and notify the FCHD's Environmental Health Office at 301-600-1717.

Rabies is a viral disease that mainly infects mammals and is spread through the saliva of the infected animal, usually by a bite. Symptoms of rabies in animals may include fear of water, excessive salivation, failure to eat or drink, limping, unusually friendly or aggressive behavior, and/or other atypical behaviors such as nocturnal animals emerging during the daytime. The disease is nearly always fatal to humans if infected and no prompt post-exposure treatment is had.

Barry Glotfelty, Director for FCHD's Environmental Health Services, advises, "Mammals can be infected with the rabies virus so do not touch or play with unknown animals, and make sure your pets are vaccinated." If you or your pets have contact with a stray or wild animal, report it to Animal Control at 301-600-1544.

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Barbara A. Brookmyer, M.D., M.P.H. • Health Officer



350 Montevue Lane • Frederick, MD 21702

Phone: 301-600-1029 • Fax: 301-600-3111 • MD TTY: 1-800-735-2258

