

Stray cat in Millsboro tests positive for rabies

DOVER (Sept. 13, 2018) – Delaware’s Division of Public Health (DPH) is advising Sussex County residents who live in the residential area of Mount Joy Road between Townsend and Cannon roads in Millsboro of a positive case of rabies in a stray cat that came into contact with a human recently. The victim was bitten by the cat while attempting to provide aid to the animal after it was hit by a car in the victim’s driveway. The individual has begun treatment for rabies exposure.

Anyone in this area who thinks they might have been bitten, scratched or come in contact with a stray cat should immediately contact their health care provider or call the DPH Rabies Program at 302-744-4995. An epidemiologist is available 24/7. Anyone who thinks their pet may have been bitten by this cat should call their private veterinarian or the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) at 302-698-4630 or email rabies.hotline@delaware.gov.

Since Jan. 1, 2018, the Division of Public Health (DPH) has performed rabies tests on 107 animals, 10 of which were confirmed to be rabid, including three foxes, three raccoons, two cats (including this one), one dog and one horse. Rabies tests performed on four animals (one sheep, one bat and two dogs) were indeterminate. DPH only announces those rabies cases for which it is possible the animal had unknown contacts with humans and there is a risk of exposure to the community.

In addition, DPH recently announced Delaware’s first positive case of rabies in a human in nearly 80 years. A Felton woman died in August after contracting the disease.

Rabies is an infectious disease affecting the nervous system of humans and other mammals. Infection can occur through the

bite or scratch of an infected animal or if saliva from such an animal gets into the eyes, nose, mouth or an opening in the skin. Rabies in humans and animals cannot be cured once symptoms appear, and therefore, if an animal that has exposed a human is unavailable to be quarantined or tested, DPH recommends that people receive post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) treatment, a series of four vaccinations, as a precautionary measure.

Fortunately, rabies is also almost completely preventable. DPH recommends that members of the public take the following steps to stay clear of exposure:

- All dogs, cats, and ferrets 6 months of age and older are required by Delaware law to be vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian. Consider vaccinating livestock and horses as well. It is recommended to consult with your private veterinarian if you have any questions regarding whether your animal(s) should be vaccinated against rabies.
- Pet owners can reduce the possibility of pets being exposed to rabies by not letting them roam free.
- Spaying or neutering your pet may reduce the tendency to roam or fight and, thus, reduce the chance they will be exposed to rabies.
- Do not keep your pet's food or water outdoors; bowls can attract wild and stray animals.
- Keep your garbage securely covered.
- Do not touch or otherwise handle wild or unfamiliar animals, even if they appear friendly.

For more information on the DPH rabies program, visit <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/dpc/rabies.html> or call 1-866-972-9705 or 302-744-4995. For more information on rabies, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation

to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.