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Protecting People, Pets and Livestock - Yesterday, Today and Always.

PRESS RELEASE

ALVMA Promotes World Rabies Day

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONTGOMERY, Ala. - The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association is hoping to raise awareness about rabies by supporting World Rabies Day, September 28, 2013. Rabies is a deadly disease and people need to realize how easily the disease can be transmitted.

"The ALVMA wants to raise awareness about the risk of rabies by bringing attention to World Rabies Day," says ALVMA President Bill Bledsoe, D.V.M. "Pet owners need to understand the risks involved and the need to vaccinate their pets."

Started in 2007, the Global Alliance for Rabies Control wanted to create a global opportunity to focus on rabies prevention. The ALVMA supports this effort and encourages pet owners to have their pets vaccinated. Dogs, cats, ferrets, horses and valuable livestock should be vaccinated. Distinct strains of rabies virus have been identified in raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes. Several species of insectivorous bats are also reservoirs for strains of the rabies virus. Recently, CDC researchers have suggested that feral cat colonies may also pose a rabies risk.

Some facts to consider:

- Currently, only about 50-60% of the dogs and 20-25% of the cats in Alabama are vaccinated for rabies.
- There were approximately 7,000 dog and cat bites in Alabama in 2012. A significant percentage of these bites result in post exposure rabies prophylaxis for the person who is bitten at a cost of from \$1,000 to \$3,000 for each exposure.
- In Alabama, raccoons and bats most frequently are found to be rabid. In 2012 there were 55 cases of rabies diagnosed in animals in Alabama (62% were raccoons and 18% were bats).
- Rabies is caused by a virus that animals and people can get through exposure to the saliva or nervous tissue from a rabid animal and is nearly always fatal without proper postexposure treatment.
- Rabies is zoonotic, which means it can spread from animals to people.
- Rabies is 100% preventable. In most cases, preventing rabies is as simple as ensuring adequate animal vaccination and control, avoiding contact with wild animals, and educating those at risk.

Vaccinations will protect you and your pets from rabies infection. If you or your pet is bitten or scratched by a wild animal, contact your physician/veterinarian immediately. The rabies virus infects the central nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death. The early symptoms of rabies in people are similar to that of many other illnesses, including fever, headache, and general weakness or discomfort. As the disease progresses more specific symptoms occur.

Veterinarians volunteer their time to serve as Rabies Control Officers in all 67 counties in support of the Alabama Department of Public Health's efforts to prevent rabies in our state. In furtherance of this goal, many veterinarians donate their time to conduct low-cost rabies vaccination clinics in most areas of the state. Schedules for these clinics are advertised through local media. Whether you take your pet to your regular veterinarian or to a rabies clinic, be sure to have your pet vaccinated.

Founded in 1907, The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association is comprised of approximately 725 veterinarians from around the state, all committed to protecting People, Pets and Livestock – Yesterday, Today and Always.

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