



## Alabama Veterinary Medical Association

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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 RELEASE

**MONTGOMERY, Ala.** - The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association is aiming to raise awareness about rabies through supporting World Rabies Day, September 28, 2016. Rabies is a deadly disease and people need to realize how easily the disease can be transmitted.

"Veterinarians are seeing an increase in rabies cases, however, rabies can be prevented," says ALVMA President Hal Pate, D.V.M. "Statistics show 40% of the people bitten are young children. Keep your pets vaccinated and to talk to your children about the risk of contact with wild animals."

Formed 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:

- In 2015, there were 3,447 cases of animal rabies reported in the U.S. These animals, mostly wildlife, can expose humans or pets to rabies.
- It is estimated that 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 last year. 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 2015 there were 81 cases of rabies diagnosed in animals in Alabama (63% were raccoons and 16% 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 post exposure 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.

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. Rabies vaccinations will protect your pets from rabies infection. Be sure your pet vaccinations are current and take all precautions to avoid contact with any animal that may be infected.

Founded in 1907, The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association is comprised of approximately 700 veterinarians from around the state, all committed to protecting People, Pets and Livestock – Yesterday, Today and Always.

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ALVMA Public Health Committee Talking Points on Rabies

<http://www.alvma.com/?page=WorldRabiesDay>

Useful Websites:

CDC Rabies Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies>

WHO Rabies Website: <http://www.who.int/rabies/en/>

NASPHV Rabies Compendium: <http://www.nasphv.org/documentsCompendia.html>

World Rabies Day Website: <http://rabiesalliance.org/world-rabies-day/>

Alabama Department of Public Health: <http://www.adph.org> (rabies in the A-Z index).