

Rabid Stray Cat Comes in Contact with Local Resident

SIMCOE, August 26, 2016 – The Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit (HNHU) was notified yesterday by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency of a stray cat that tested positive for rabies. Unfortunately, the rabid cat had bitten a Caledonia resident who is now being treated by healthcare providers. The Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit is now working with Hamilton Public Health to further investigate if any other persons were exposed to the same rabid cat.

The incident comes after months of rabid raccoons and skunks being found in the areas of Hamilton, Haldimand, Niagara and Brant. With ten rabid raccoons found in Haldimand since the start of the outbreak in December of 2015, this incident is the first in the county to involve a rabid cat and, of more concern, the first to involve human exposure.

Since the start of the raccoon rabies outbreak in December of 2015, provincial and local authorities including the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, local public health units and local animal control agencies have heightened their efforts to control the spread of the virus through enhanced surveillance, continued investigations and an aggressive bait vaccination campaign. Unfortunately, the situation continues and the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Malcolm Lock, is reminding the public of the seriousness of the situation. "It is important people understand that the rabies virus is in the area and it is life-threatening" states Dr. Lock. "Everyone must do their part to protect themselves, their loved ones and their pets" he added.

To reduce the risk and limit the spread of rabies in the community, Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit is asking the public to take the following preventative measures:

- Ensure your pet's rabies vaccination is up to date. It's the law.
- Stay away from and do not touch unfamiliar animals, or animals acting strangely.
- Stay away from wild animals and do not feed them.
- Prevent pets from coming into contact with wildlife.
- Supervise children when they are around animals. Accidents do happen.
- Do not let pets roam free.
- Feed pets indoors. Feeding pets outdoors can attract other unwanted animals.
- Keep garbage securely covered.

Persons in Haldimand and Norfolk wanting to report wildlife (e.g. raccoons, skunks, foxes, etc.) exhibiting abnormal behaviour should contact the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Rabies Information Line at 1-888-574-6656 or their local animal control. If, however, the animal was involved in a bite, scratch or any other contact that might result in transmission of rabies to a

person, the incident should be reported to the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit at 519-426-6170 or 905-318-6623. Incidents only involving domestic pets being exposed to potentially rabid animals should be reported to your local vet. Veterinarians seeking assistance with risk assessments, testing or post-exposure management can contact the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300

For more information on rabies visit <https://hnhu.org/health-topic/rabies/>

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