

September 28, 2015 is World Rabies Day. This date was chosen to commemorate the death of Louis Pasteur who created the first rabies vaccine and laid the foundation of rabies prevention. Thanks to science and modern veterinary care most of us here in the United States never give this horrible disease much thought, but Rabies kills over 59,000 humans world-wide each year. Rabies is caused by a virus that can spread from animals to people through exposure to the saliva or nervous tissue from a rabid animal and while it is 100% preventable, it is 100% fatal without proper post-exposure treatment.

In 2014 there were 76 cases of rabies diagnosed in animals in Alabama with Raccoons (51%) and Bats (21%) being the most frequently positive. Although wildlife are the most frequently diagnosed carrier of rabies, this disease can affect all mammals which is why all dogs, cats and ferrets are required, by law, to be vaccinated against rabies in Alabama. While not required by law, equine owners are highly encouraged to also vaccinate their horses, mules & donkeys. Sadly only about 50-60% of the dogs and 20-25% of the cats in Alabama are vaccinated for rabies putting humans, and especially children at risk as 40% of the people bitten by suspect rabid animals are children under 15 years of age.

Keeping pets vaccinated against rabies is vital and vaccinations can be done by any licensed Veterinarian at their clinic. To help pet owners there are also mobile Rabies Vaccination Clinics that generally take place in the spring and late summer throughout the county as scheduled by the area Rabies Control Officer via the Alabama Department of Public Health. Whether your pet gets a one-year or a three-year vaccination is something your veterinarian will advise you about depending on your pet's age, previous vaccination history and their protocols but please make sure to keep your pet current on this very important vaccination.

While many people love watching wildlife, enticing them close to homes, children and pets is just not a good idea. Please don't leave food outside for your pets; keep your garbage securely covered; please don't keep wildlife as pets and teach children to steer clear of unfamiliar animals – even if they appear friendly.

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. But no matter, if you are bitten by a domestic or wild animal, go to the appropriate medical facility for treatment and contact your local health department or animal control. Domestic pets that have bitten a human generally requires a mandatory ten-day quarantine at a licensed veterinary hospital and the County Health Department will follow-up to see that applicable state laws are followed. In the event of a bite from an animal that cannot be captured, the person will most likely have to undergo rabies post-exposure treatment – remember, untreated rabies is FATAL!

If you are a Sam's Club member we hope you might be doing some shopping this Friday, 2 October from 9 am – 1 pm as our volunteers will be there for a Supply Drive. Items donated are truly put to good use and help us use donated dollars for direct animal care costs, so thank you ahead of time for any donations we receive on Friday.