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DOH-OKALOOSA REMINDS RESIDENTS TO AVOID CONTACT WITH STRAY PETS AND WILDLIFE



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FT. WALTON BEACH, Fla.— The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) reminds residents to avoid contact with stray pets and wildlife to keep themselves and their families safe from rabies and other possible injuries.

Animals with rabies may show strange behavior—they can be aggressive, attacking for no apparent reason. Some animals can act very tame (especially wild animals). They may not be able to eat, drink or swallow. They may drool because they cannot swallow their saliva. They may stagger or become paralyzed.

If your animal is attacked by a wild stray or unvaccinated animal, DO NOT examine your pet for injuries without wearing gloves. Wash your pet with soap and water to remove saliva from the attacking animal. Do not let your animal come into contact with other animals or people until animal control or the health department can deal with the situation.

To avoid being bitten:

- Do not approach stray pets or wildlife.
- Do not feed or attempt to pet or handle stray pets or wildlife.
- Do not disturb an animal that is sleeping, eating or caring for its young.
- If a strange animal walks toward you, stay calm and slowly move away.
- Bites from dogs are the most commonly reported animal bite. Additional tips for preventing bites from dogs include:
 - Dogs are more likely to bite other dogs than people; when walking your own pet dog, avoid areas where free-roaming dogs may be present.
 - If another dog attacks your dog, don't put any part of your body between the dogs; consider carrying a stick or another sturdy object that you can safely use to try to keep the aggressive dog away.
 - Do not make eye-to-eye contact with a stray or aggressive acting dog.
 - Do not run or scream if a stray dog approaches you – be "still like a tree." If you fall or are knocked to the ground by a dog, curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck. Protect your face. Try to stay still and do not scream.
 - Report stray dogs to local authorities such as animal control.

If you are bitten by an animal and emergency help is needed, go to a hospital or medical treatment area, or call 911.

What to do if you are bitten:

- Before treating the wound, wash your hands with soap and clean fresh water.
- Remove any item that is in the way of caring for the wound.
- Put pressure on the wound with a clean cloth to stop bleeding.
- After the bleeding has stopped, pour bottled or clean running water over the wound.
- Gently clean around the wound with soap and clean water.
- Pat dry and use an adhesive bandage or dry clean cloth to cover the wound.
- Leave unclean wounds open.

Report the bite to your local animal control agency. Tell the animal control official everything you know about the animal and where it went.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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