

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 21, 2019

**Contact: D.T. Simmons**

(850) 653-2111

**HEALTH ALERT FOR CONTACT WITH RACCOON**

**Apalachicola, Fla** — The Florida Department of Health in Franklin County is issuing an alert for Franklin County residents and visitors on February 21, 2019 after being made aware of a wild caught raccoon being kept as a pet.

Raccoons are considered one of the highest-risk animals for rabies infection in Florida. Rabies is a fatal disease to warm blooded animals and humans. Rabid animals can be healthy appearing during early stages of the disease but still infect people or other animals. Rabies is transmitted through exposure to the saliva and nervous tissue from a rabid animal through a bite, scratch or contact with mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose or mouth. Appropriate treatment started soon after an exposure can protect an exposed person from the disease. There is no consistently effective treatment for people who wait to seek care after symptoms of rabies develop, and nearly 100% of people who become ill from rabies die.

The raccoon is a wild caught female that has been taken around the City of Apalachicola on a leash and harness and potentially into public establishments and places of business to include bars, restaurants, and banks. The raccoon is currently unavailable for rabies testing and an unknown number of individuals may have come into contact with this animal. Due to possible exposure of rabies, DOH-Franklin is asking residents and visitors who may have been bitten or scratched by this or any other raccoon to seek care promptly. Reach out to the Florida Department of Health in Franklin County at (850) 653-2111 if you are concerned that you may have been exposed to this or any other raccoon or potentially rabid animal.

The Florida Department of Health in Franklin urges residents to avoid contact with wild and stray animals to protect themselves from the risk of rabies exposure.

Do not handle, feed or unintentionally attract wild animals. Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. If you are bitten by a wild or domestic animal, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and go to your family doctor or hospital for medical attention promptly.

For more information, contact the Florida Department of Health in Franklin County at (850) 653-2111.

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health in Franklin County, please visit <http://franklin.floridahealth.gov/>.

**Florida Department of Health in Franklin County**

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