



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY
Health Department

1930 Ninth Avenue
Helena, MT 59601
PH: 406.4HEALTH or 406.443.2584
Fax: 406.457.8990

Press Release
February 12, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Laurel Riek, Environmental Health Specialist, 447-8361
Lriek@co.lewis-clark.mt.us

RABID CAT IDENTIFIED IN LEWIS & CLARK COUNTY

Helena – The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department has confirmed that a semi-feral cat in the East Helena area has tested presumptive positive for rabies. Confirmation testing is expected by Friday. In the interest of protecting the public, we are providing prevention information now.

Rabies is an infectious viral disease that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. People primarily get rabies from the bite of an animal with rabies (a rabid animal). If the person's skin is broken by a bite, an exposure occurs from the saliva of the infected animal. The following are actions to take if you or your family members have been bitten:

- **Wash any wound** from an animal thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention for wound care.
- **Report any animal bites** to the Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department at 447-8355 or after hours call the County Sheriff.

"Rabies is out there in our wild animal populations," explains Laurel Riek, environmental health specialist for the health department. "This is a reminder that rabies is preventable. We should not approach animals we don't know and we need to keep our pets' vaccinations current."

City and county animal control agencies, area vets, the Humane Society, along with DPHHS, and the health department are working together to keep our community safe. The Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department suggests the following steps to help protect your family and your pets from rabies:

- Check the rabies vaccination for your pets. If it is not current, **vaccinate your pets**. Your vaccinated pet is your family's best protection.
- Do not approach or handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. "Love your own, leave other animals alone" is a good principle for children to learn.
- Confine your animals to your property. Pets that are allowed to roam are at higher risk for rabies exposure and infection.
- Keep wild animals out of your home. Secure doors and windows, cap chimneys with screens, and close off any openings in porches, basements, and attics.

For an informational message on rabies call the health department hotline at **457-8904**.

The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis & Clark County residents.

#####