



St. Mary's County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT REPORTS RABIES CASE IN MECHANICSVILLE AREA

Cat tests positive for rabies, other cats captured and tested after human contact

(LEONARDTOWN, MD) May 4, 2006 -- A cat, which was transported to Charles County from a farm in Mechanicsville after biting its caretaker, tested positive for rabies this week. Health department officials in Charles County alerted St. Mary's County health department to the situation after treating the Waldorf, MD man who had contact with the animal.

The property, located in the 28500 block of Old Village Rd., Mechanicsville is in close proximity to Mechanicsville Elementary School. Word that a large number of other unvaccinated cats on the farm were at risk for the disease prompted an immediate assessment of the situation, and alerts were put out to St. Mary's County Public Schools, St. Mary's County Animal Control and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Center for Veterinary Medicine, according to Daryl Calvano, director of environmental health services in St. Mary's County.

Health department staff surveyed surrounding residences to determine if other exposures, human or animal, may have occurred. As of Thursday no other known exposures were confirmed. Dr. William B. Icenhower, health officer, sent a letter home to students at the elementary school to alert parents about

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Rabies, p. 2

the situation. The letter stated that the health department advised school officials that all outdoor activities be curtailed at the school while animal control measures and testing took place.

As of Thursday morning the number of unvaccinated cats captured on the property and euthanized was 60 and expected to go higher. Officials sent two additional cats to a state lab for testing, after learning that a second caretaker may have been exposed. Results are pending.

“The animals that were euthanized were unvaccinated and posing a public health risk to people and animals in the surrounding community, said Calvano. “This situation serves as a potent reminder of the responsibility of all pet owners to spay or neuter their pets, and vaccinate the animals they care for,” he added.

The St. Mary’s County Health Department urges residents to practice rabies protection year round by vaccinating their pets. To ensure pets’ vaccines are up-to-date, check shot records with your vet. The St. Mary’s Animal Welfare League holds rabies vaccine clinics monthly between March and November. The next two clinic are May 8 and June 12, 6-8 p.m. at the St. Mary’s County Fairground in Leonardtown near the 4-H Building. The cost is \$10 per shot. For more information call 301-373-5659.

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