



## HARFORD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### HEALTH DEPARTMENT OBSERVES WORLD RABIES DAY BY OFFERING PET VACCINATION CLINIC

**[Harford County, Maryland, August 27, 2009]** –Again this year, the Health Department is collaborating with international rabies experts and 4 Paws Spa and Training Center Inc., a local business in Forest Hill, to bring attention to World Rabies Day. In recognition of this event, the Harford County Health Department, Bureau of Environmental Health, will offer a low cost Rabies Vaccination Clinic.

Although World Rabies Day formally is recognized on Monday, September 28th the Health Department is conducting the clinic on Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. To provide for greater accessibility, the event will take place for the second consecutive year at 4 Paws Spa and Training Center, Inc. located at 121 A Industry Lane in the Forest Hill. Upon entering the airpark, signs will direct the public to the clinic.

Veterinarians at the Health Department-sponsored clinic will vaccinate dogs, cats, and ferrets for the very low cost of \$5.00 per animal, however only 300 doses/tags will be available that day. Dog, cat, and ferret owners who wish to protect their pets from this dreaded disease are invited to participate and take advantage of this service while vaccine supplies last. In addition to the vaccinations, information will be available, as well as special rates on "wash and dry" self-service for pet owners through 4 Paws Spa and Training Center, Inc.

"We have been very pleasantly surprised by the number of calls we have received from the public in advance of this year's event," says Susan Kelly, Health Officer. "In a struggling economy, this represents a real 'win / win' for pet owners as well as for public health. By partnering with a local business and people from virtually around the world to work towards a common goal, we see this as an opportunity to highlight rabies prevention and control efforts in our community while reducing costs to pet owners."

"We are excited to partner with the Health Department to bring this low cost vaccination clinic to the public. The pet industry, veterinarians, and government agencies all agree that rabies prevention starts with the animal owner," advises Robin Greenwood, proprietor of 4 Paws Spa and Training Center, Inc.

Founded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Alliance for Rabies Control, a UK charity, the World Rabies Day initiative aims to bring together relevant partners in an effort to address rabies prevention and control through coordinated pet vaccination efforts and educational awareness focusing on proper wound management and administration of rabies vaccination after an exposure has occurred.

"We cannot let our guard down with rabies," warns Ms Kelly. "The fact that rabies is ever-present in wildlife necessarily exposes our pets and possibly our family members to potential risk of the disease." Between January 1<sup>st</sup> and August 14<sup>th</sup> of this year, the Health Department has identified 11 rabies positive animals, including 8 raccoons, 1 foxes, 1 skunk and a horse.

Statistics demonstrating the impact of rabies on public health include:

- 55,000 deaths worldwide annually (approximately one person every ten minutes)
- Approximately 7,000 cases of animal rabies in the U.S. annually. These animals, mostly wildlife, can expose humans or pets to rabies.
- 1-3 cases of human rabies in the U.S. per year.
- The last reported case of human rabies in Maryland was in 1976 as the result of an exposure to an infected bat.

It is estimated that every year 30,000-40,000 US residents are potentially exposed to rabies, requiring costly and uncomfortable human rabies post-exposure prophylaxis. As of June 30, 2009, nineteen (19) Harford County residents have received rabies post exposure treatment through the Health Department as a result of potential exposure to the virus, and others have been treated through their primary care providers. Post exposure treatment requires administration of Human Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG) and four vaccinations over the course of two weeks, costs of which might not be covered by health insurance.

Additional information is available online at [www.harfordcountyhealth.com/rabies](http://www.harfordcountyhealth.com/rabies) , <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/Epidemiology/Epidemiology.htm#Wild%20Animals> and [www.worldrabiesday.org](http://www.worldrabiesday.org) . You may also contact David Reiher, Harford County Health Department, Rabies and Vector Control Program at 410-877-2315.

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