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Health Department Reports Rabid Cats in Wilmerding

PITTSBURGH - The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) is warning residents to refrain from feeding stray animals and wildlife, even if they appear healthy, and to stay away from them altogether to avoid exposure to rabies. Recently, an entire Wilmerding family was potentially exposed to the rabies virus after being scratched by stray kittens which they found and took into their care. Two kittens tested positive for rabies.

“Well-intentioned efforts by individuals sometime can result in unnecessary exposure to pathogens like the rabies virus,” said Health Department Director, Dr. Karen Hacker. “Given the events in Wilmerding, we advise residents to stay away from wild or stray animals and if those animals appear to be acting strange or become threatening, call your local animal control service, the police or the Pennsylvania Game Commission.”

Any individual who is bitten, scratched or otherwise exposed to saliva from a stray or any other animal, should immediately cleanse the contact area with soap and water, seek emergency medical treatment and call the Allegheny County Health Department at 412-687-2243 to report the incident.

Rabies is almost always fatal when exposures are left untreated. The rabies vaccine is highly effective when given promptly after an exposure, but is still a major expense and inconvenience that can be avoided by not having contact with potentially rabid animals.

So far this year, eleven rabid animals have been reported in Allegheny County - five bats, two raccoons, two stray cats, and two groundhogs.

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