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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rabies Prevention

Since January 1, 2026, Forest County Health Department has followed up on 18 animal bites or potential exposure to rabies. The Health Department is required under state statute 95.21 “Rabies Control Program” to prevent and control the spread of the rabies virus. Rabies is a preventable disease that affects the central nervous system of warm-blooded animals, including people. It can lead to death.

Rabies is typically spread by a bite or scratch by the animal that has the virus in its saliva. But it can also be spread by a rabid animal’s saliva having contact with an open cut or mucous membranes (eyes, nostrils, or mouth). Rabies occurs primarily in wildlife, such as bats and skunks, in Wisconsin. Cases of rabies in humans is very rare.

Symptoms of rabies include headache, fever, irritability, double vision, itching, or pain at the bite site. If you or someone you know is bitten or scratched,

- Wash the site very well with soap and water for 10-15 minutes,
- Control any bleeding,
- Put a gauze or bandage on the wound, and
- Seek health care right away.

Domestic animal bites should be reported to Forest County Sheriff’s Office’s non-emergency line at 715-478-3331. Wild or stray animal bites can be reported to the Forest County Health Department.

We are asking for your help to keep your pets, yourself, your family and friends safe from animal bites. Things you can do include:

- Keep your pet current on rabies vaccinations.
- Keep your pet on a leash.
- Avoid situations that can lead to a bite or scratch.
 - Leave the handling of unfamiliar or wild animals to professionals.
 - Do not try to separate fighting animals.
- Teach children to not approach or touch unfamiliar animals.

Please call the Forest County Health Department at 715-478-3371 with any questions.