Health Department
CLEVELAND COUNTY

Media contact:
DeShay Oliver
Deputy Health Director
Public Information Officer
Cleveland County Health Department
Office: 980-484-5199
Deshay.oliver@clevelandcountync.gov

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Two Cases of Rabies Identified in Cleveland County

SHELBY, NC – On January 15, 2026, the Cleveland County Health Department was notified of two skunks that tested positive for rabies. These are the first rabid animals identified in the county this year. The animals were found on Haywood Road, Casar and on Marion Street, Shelby. Any person bitten or exposed to potentially infectious saliva from these animals should contact their healthcare provider or the local health department for a rabies risk assessment. You may contact the Cleveland County Health Department at 980-484-5169 or 980-484-5100.

Rabies is a fatal yet preventable disease if post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is administered. Rabies is transmitted by the bite of an infected animal or via contamination of open wounds or mucus membranes with potentially infectious material such as saliva.

Prevention of rabies is based on protection of susceptible animals and people and appropriate management of persons and animals exposed to rabies:

1. Vaccinate pets. In accordance with NC State Law, all dogs, cats, and ferrets must be kept currently vaccinated against rabies and must wear a rabies tag. Cats are the most commonly identified domestic animal with rabies.
2. Control measures for pets exposed to rabies: If pets are exposed to rabies, they should receive a booster dose of rabies vaccine **if** they are currently vaccinated at the time of exposure. If pets are not currently vaccinated against rabies when exposed, the animals will be euthanized or quarantined for six months in accordance with state law.
3. Control measures for persons exposed to rabies: Seek medical guidance from your healthcare provider or the local health department if you believe you have been exposed to rabies.
4. Limit stray and feral animals. In the cities of Shelby, Kings Mountain, Boiling Springs, and Grover all dogs must be kept on a leash. People should not approach stray or feral dogs or cats. Feral cat colonies should be intensively monitored, and their location reported to Cleveland County Animal Services.

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5. Leave wildlife alone. Raccoons and other wildlife serve as the reservoir for rabies in North Carolina.

Rabies occurs throughout North Carolina. Anyone that sees an animal demonstrating unusual behavior should call Cleveland County Animal Services at 704-481-9884.

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