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Global Rabies Prevention Initiative Starts Locally

In Cleveland County a global grassroots campaign is taking shape. This year, the Cleveland County Health Department will be teaming up with international rabies experts to celebrate the first annual World Rabies Day on September 8, 2007.

The Health Department is providing information to the public about rabies on their website which can be accessed at www.clevelandcounty.com and click on health department. In addition, county government officials will receive information packets about rabies and animal control staff are providing support throughout the community.

“We saw this as an opportunity to highlight the rabies prevention and control efforts in our community, while teaming up with people around the world towards a common goal,” says Denese Stallings, Health Director.

Founded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Alliance for Rabies Control, a United Kingdom charity, the World Rabies Day initiative aims to bring together relevant partners in an effort to address rabies prevention and control. Dr. Deborah Briggs, Executive Director for the Alliance for Rabies Control admits, “Until now, there has not been a coordinated effort to let the world know that this disease can be readily prevented through education, pet vaccination and increased human awareness as to proper wound management and administration of rabies vaccination after an exposure has occurred.”

In the United States, the greatest achievement in rabies control and prevention occurred half-a-century ago with effective implementation of dog vaccination, licensing and stray dog control. “We cannot let our guard down with rabies,” says Denese Stallings, Health Director. “Rabies is ever-present in wildlife which can expose our pets and possibly our family members.”

It is estimated that every year 30,000-40,000 United States residents are potentially exposed to rabies requiring human rabies post-exposure prophylaxis. Since 1998, Cleveland County has had 156 confirmed cases of rabies. Last year, 20 cases of rabies were confirmed and since January 2007, 15 cases have been confirmed by the state laboratory. Cleveland County has ranked high in our state for confirmed rabies cases.

“Rabies prevention starts with the animal owner,” advises Mrs. Stallings. “We recommend that people vaccinate dogs, cats, ferrets, and any other animals that have regular contact with humans, such as horses.”

Additional information is available online at www.clevelandcounty.com and click on health department and at www.worldrabiesday.org or by calling Sam Lockridge at 704 476-3166.

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