



For Immediate Release
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Contact: Harrisonburg Police Department
Sergeant Chris M. Monahan
540-434-4436
www.harrisonburgva.gov/police

HPD Urges Citizens to Vaccinate Household Pets

Harrisonburg, Va. – Harrisonburg Police Department (HPD) is seeing a rise in calls for service related to possible rabid animals, mainly raccoons and foxes. According to HPD Animal Care Officer Geoffrey Bechtel, the symptoms of rabies can often mirror the symptoms of the distemper virus, which has been making its rounds through the local wildlife population. The animal may appear disoriented, abnormally aggressive or fearful, and may have seizures. “It is not possible to tell if the animal has one of these viruses or some other medical condition without laboratory testing,” Bechtel added.

It is very important to keep household pets up to date on vaccinations, as these diseases can pass from wildlife to unvaccinated, domesticated animals. Additionally, HPD reminds residents that it is important to leave wildlife alone and not to interact with any animal that appears sick or injured. Officers are trained to respond to animal calls for service and urge citizens to call police when they see wildlife in trouble or acting unusual.

“If you suspect that a wild animal may be rabid, sick, or in danger, give us a call,” Bechtel concluded.

Citizens can call the Harrisonburg Police Department’s non-emergency number at 540-434-4436 if they suspect that a wild animal may be rabid, 911 if it is an emergency, or contact HPD’s Animal Care and Control Officer at 540-437-2600 if they have questions regarding vaccination requirements for household pets in the City of Harrisonburg.

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