For Immediate Release

MCHD to host rabies vaccination clinic for dogs, cats & ferrets on May 4

MORGANTOWN, WV (April 15, 2019) — In an effort to combat higher-than-normal reports of raccoons with rabies this year, including a few that have had encounters with pets, Monongalia County Health Department will hold a drive-through rabies vaccine clinic from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, May 4.

Dr. Jean Meade of Cheat Lake Animal Hospital will administer the inoculations to dogs, cats and ferrets. Owners can drive to the upper level of MCHD, located at 453 Van Voorhis Road, where Dr. Meade will give the vaccine, which costs $10 cash. Pet parents will receive a certificate and a tag for their animal.

While it’s normal to have reports of rabid raccoons and other wildlife in the summer, as of early April, there have already been reports of eight rabid raccoons in Monongalia County. Three of those had encounters with pets; the other five were collected and tested as part of enhanced surveillance efforts by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS).

In February, two dogs in their owners’ yards killed a raccoon. The dogs had to be re-vaccinated for rabies and remain under observation for an extended time. The owner, who had disposed of the raccoon and cleaned up the dogs, also underwent rabies postexposure prophylaxis. A nearly identical scene was repeated a month later when a homeowner came home and found a dead raccoon in the yard where two dogs had been playing.

In another case called into MCHD, a rabid raccoon was found in Morgantown in early April.

“Although rabies has been in wildlife in Monongalia County, we have already seen cases in wild animals that tested positive this year,” said Dr. Diane K. Gross, regional epidemiologist with MCHD and a veterinarian. “It’s a stark reminder that there is a risk...
from rabies in this part of West Virginia and it’s important that everyone takes measure to protect themselves and their pets.”

MCHD urges everyone to avoid animals they do not know, including raccoons, skunks and bats, especially if they are acting oddly. These are some of the more common wild animals that can carry rabies. This warning applies year-round.

Rabies is a viral disease found in mammals that attacks the nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov).

“Vaccinating pets not only protects them but also then protects you from being exposed to rabies,” Dr. Gross said.

Area residents can take precautions to help keep raccoons and other pests out of their homes and away from their property. Pet owners who have not gotten their dogs and cats vaccinated for rabies should do so immediately.

It is the law for pets to be vaccinated no later than at the age of six months. Rabies vaccinations can be given to an animal beginning at the age of three months. Once an animal receives the first vaccine, it should get a booster one year later. After that, a booster is needed every three years.

Once animals begin to show signs of rabies, they cannot be saved. That is why it is so important to have pets vaccinated. Even an animal that is up to date on the rabies vaccine that has an encounter with a rabid animal must be re-vaccinated and observed for a period of time.

“This is a simple and safe procedure to protect you and your pet from a fatal disease,” Dr. Gross said.

Other area facilities also are holding rabies vaccine clinics. They include: Tractor Supply Co.: 1-2:30 p.m. May 5 and 19, June 2 and 16, $22, 304-284-9574; Pet Valu, Suncrest Towne Centre: 3 to 5 p.m. every other Sunday, $19, 304-381-4296; Morgantown Ag Services at Southern States, 9 a.m.-noon May 18, $7, 304-296-4441.

For more information on the MCHD Rabies Vaccination Clinic, call Mary Wade Triplet at 304-598-5152. Also, check out monchd.org and follow us on Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD and on Instagram at WVMCHD for up-to-date information on health and wellness in the community.