



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
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Re: Hernando County Experiencing Increase in Sick Raccoons

Date: April 13, 2018

Hernando County is currently experiencing an increase in cases of sick raccoons.

In one of the first sick wildlife cases this year, the raccoon (remains) was collected and tested by the Hernando County Health Department. It was determined that the raccoon did not have rabies, but did have distemper.

Raccoons are highly susceptible to both Canine and Feline Distemper. It is the second leading cause of death for raccoons and is nearly always fatal for the animal. There is no treatment for either form of distemper.

Raccoons that contract distemper initially show signs of upper respiratory infection (runny nose and watery eyes). In the final stages, raccoons may begin to wander aimlessly, walk in circles, and/or appear disoriented. The animal may experience paralysis or exhibit bizarre behavior as a result of brain damage from the infection.

If you see a raccoon that is showing these signs, stay away from the animal (also keep pets away) and contact a wildlife trapper or the Sheriff's Office. Distemper is highly contagious. For this reason, HCSO deputies must euthanize any raccoon that we find that is displaying signs of distemper – then bury the animal at least two feet deep, on site. This is to prevent the spread of the virus to humans or other animals.

Please ensure that your pets are vaccinated and kept under control. Unvaccinated pets that are permitted to wander are at a higher risk to contract distemper and other harmful diseases. It is also a violation of Hernando County Ordinances to allow pets to wander and/or to not be properly vaccinated and licensed.

With some simple, precautionary steps, we as a community can help prevent the spread of the distemper virus and keep our families and pets safe.

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, and remains accountable to them.