

## Rabid Kitten Causes Human Treatment in Watauga and Wilkes



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A rabid kitten is causing those who tried to care for the sick animal to undergo treatment for rabies in both Wilkes and Watauga. Wilkes County Health Department officials say the kitten was found on June 3rd at the Yadkin River Greenway entrance near CVS under the West D St. / Reddies River Bridge. Someone reportedly

transported the animal to Watauga County, where it was dropped off at the Watauga Humane Society and found there Monday. Someone dealing the animal there was exposed to the illness, which was determined yesterday to be rabies. The kitten was euthanized and submitted for rabies diagnostic testing and found to be positive for rabies and several persons who attempted to care for the kitten and were bitten have already been identified and are receiving rabies post exposure prophylaxis. Wilkes officials are concerned that others might have been exposed, and have issued a description of the kitten as charcoal colored gray/black with a few white spots. Anyone who had contact with this kitten, or was bitten by it, since approximately May 19th should call the Wilkes County Health Department at 336 651-7573 for medical consultation and rabies risk assessment. Their release says that rabies is a fatal disease of both man and animals. If you were bitten by this kitten or suspect you had a non-bite exposure to the kitten's saliva please call the health department immediately. Rabies post exposure prophylaxis consists of wound cleansing and administration of rabies immune globulin and a series of four vaccines.

Rabies is common in wildlife in North Carolina and Wilkes County. Domestic animals are commonly infected with rabies as a result of exposure to raccoons. Cats are the domestic animal most commonly identified with rabies in North Carolina. Stray and feral cats should be left alone and the public should not attempt to interact with them or feed them. While this kitten was positively identified with rabies, a bite from any kitten or cat that is lost to follow up would be an indication for administration of rabies post exposure prophylaxis.

For the welfare of the animal, and the safety and health of the public, all cats and dogs in Wilkes County should be kept on leash (whether or not you have a county leash law, this is good advice). When bitten or scratched by any animal (even a dog or cat that is currently vaccinated against rabies) you should thoroughly clean the wound with soap and warm water and contact your physician or health department for additional advice.

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