



Media Release

Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center

Public Affairs Office

36000 Darnall Loop

Fort Hood, Texas, 76544

mikaela.t.cade.civ@mail.mil Email

Telephone (254) 288-8005/286-7954

Web site: www.crdamc.amedd.army.mil

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Two positive rabies cases discovered at Fort Hood

FORT HOOD, Texas – Within the last week two separate cases of rabies have been identified on post by the Fort Hood Veterinary Center, resulting in one confirmed human exposure requiring treatment.

The first identified case occurred May 12 and involved a skunk that was sighted during daylight hours acting strangely in a motor pool on Motorpool Road. The second case, on May 16, involved a dark gray and white kitten that attacked a Fort Hood resident outside a home on Central Drive on post.

“At this time, there is one confirmed exposure and the victim has started post exposure rabies prophylaxis,” Dr. John Kuczek, the officer in charge of the Fort Hood Veterinary Center said.

As a result of these instances, Public Health Command and the Fort Hood Veterinary Center strongly urge all residents to be aware and avoid handling wild or stray animals, and ensure their pets are properly vaccinated for rabies.

“The importance of receiving appropriate medical evaluation following contact with a feral/stray animal cannot be overstated,” Kuczek said. “If you or your pets had contact with either of these cases, please contact your local veterinarian or health care provider immediately.”

An animal that is infected with rabies may not show any signs or symptoms until late in the disease, often just days before its death. The animal can, however, still spread the deadly virus while appearing completely normal.

The rabies virus is transmitted to humans by the saliva of infected animals through bite wounds, contact with mucous membranes or broken skin. Humans can become infected and harbor the virus for weeks to months, and in extremely rare cases, years before becoming ill. During this incubation period, which averages between one and three months, rabies can be prevented with appropriate treatment, including a series of vaccinations. Once symptoms occur, however, death is almost always certain.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, “the rabies virus infects the central nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death. The early symptoms of rabies in people are similar to that of many other illnesses, including fever, headache, and general weakness or discomfort. As the disease progresses, more specific symptoms appear and may include insomnia,

anxiety, confusion, slight or partial paralysis, excitation, hallucinations, agitation, hypersalivation (increase in saliva), difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia (fear of water). Death usually occurs within days of the onset of these symptoms.”

Get more rabies information by visiting these Web sites: www.cdc.gov/rabies or <http://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/discond/aid/Pages/Rabies.aspx>.