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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rabies Precautions Stressed During Small Game Hunting Season

In February of this year, authorities identified several organ recipients from 4 separate states who were infected with rabies. The organ donor was found to be a North Carolina hunter and trapper of small game animals who had been bitten on two occasions by raccoons but decided not to seek medical attention for either bite. This was the first North Carolina human rabies case identified since 1955.

This tragedy was preventable and underscores the importance of seeking prompt medical attention for any animal bite. Of the animals sent to the North Carolina State Lab of Public Health during the first eight months of 2013, 155 raccoons, 17 bats, 36 skunks, 57 foxes, and 15 cats have tested positive for rabies. These animals were tested because there was an exposure or potential exposure of rabies to a human or domestic animal. Quite often, these animals appear sick or act strangely, but it is very important to remember that an animal can be shedding the rabies virus before developing outward signs of rabies infection.

Also important to remember is that, although rabies is spread mainly through bites, it can also be spread by scratches from an infected animal and by contact of infected saliva with open wounds, skin breaks, and mucous membranes (thin layers of tissue lining the eyes, nose and mouth).

During small game hunting season, it is especially important for hunters to recognize that contact with wild carnivores and bats increases the possibility for exposure to rabies infection.

If you are bitten by a wild or stray animal, or by a pet: wash the wound immediately with warm, soapy water and call your health care provider right away. Report the bite by calling Moore County Animal Control at (910) 947-2858.

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“To Protect and Promote Health through Prevention and Control of Disease and Injury.”
<http://www.moorecountync.gov/health/>

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