May 31, 2018           Contact: Rod McRae, Public Information Officer
                        240-313-3252

For Immediate Release:

The Washington County Health Department (WCHD) has confirmed rabies in an adult female, long haired, dark brown cat with tiger stripe and white markings on neck located in Greenbrier State Park, Boonsboro, MD.

The Health Department is advising anyone who had contact with the cat or her kittens between 5/15/18 and 5/29/18, to notify WCHD Nursing staff immediately for a risk assessment by calling 240-313-3210. If you call after hours or on the weekend, call the Washington County After Hours line at 240-313-3210 to reach health department on-call staff.

Rabies is a serious disease transmitted in the saliva of an infected animal. To date, 94 animals have been diagnosed with rabies in Maryland in 2018, including raccoons, bats, and cats. All mammals are susceptible to rabies, including wildlife and domestic species such as dogs and cats. Animals with rabies may act normally during the early stages of the disease, making it difficult to know the animal is infected. As the disease progresses, animals often show changes in behavior. Wild animals may act very docile and domestic animals may become aggressive. Rabid animals may stagger, drool, or become paralyzed. Washington County residents are reminded that rabies has been well established in the tristate areas since 1983, and that all wild or unknown animals should be avoided whenever possible since the possibility of exposure to rabies can occur anywhere and anytime.

Exposure includes a bite, scratch, or contamination of an abrasion, open wound or mucous membrane with saliva or neural tissue from an infected animal. When a person is bitten by or exposed to the saliva of a rabid animal, the disease is prevented by the administration of a rabies vaccine series administered over a 14-day period and a dose of rabies immunoglobulin given at the beginning of the series.

If a person has been bitten or scratched, he or she should seek immediate medical care. Post-exposure treatment is necessary to prevent rabies. If not treated, rabies is fatal. If a pet has had contact with this cat, contact your veterinarian.
Pet owners should remember that the best protection for themselves, their families, and their pets is an up-to-date rabies vaccination of all animals with which they have routine contact.

Do not let your pets roam free. Remember to enjoy wildlife from a distance and stay away from animals you do not know.

For more information about rabies, please visit our website at https://health.maryland.gov/washhealth/Pages/home.aspx

Washington County Humane Society / Animal Control: 301-733-2060

Washington County Health Department – Nursing: 240-313-3210

Washington County Health Department – Environmental Health: 240-313-3400