FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 17, 2017

Montgomery County Health Department Announces Rabies Clinic Dates

Norristown, PA (April 17, 2017) – The Montgomery County Health Department (MCHD) will be conducting its annual Low-Cost Rabies Immunization Clinics for the 26th consecutive year. It is important to note that there has been a change to the scheduling of these clinics based on a department review aimed at improving access and utilization of this service. by the community. The clinics this year will be held on the third Saturday during the months of May and September 2017 offering, like in previous years, licensed rabies vaccine to cats, dogs and ferrets at a reduced cost.

RABIES CLINIC LOCATIONS

- **The 2017 Low-Cost Rabies Immunization Clinic locations, dates, and extended times are:**

LOCATION	DATE	TIME
Abington Recycling Center 2201 Florey Lane (off of Easton Road) Abington	**May 20**	**9 AM – 12 PM**
Montgomery Hose Fire Company 201 West Freedley St. Norristown	**September 16**	**9 AM – 12 PM**

- **WHEN ARRIVING AT THE CLINIC, PLEASE REMEMBER THAT ALL ANIMALS MUST BE LEASHED OR IN AN APPROVED CARRIER.**

- **THE VACCINATION COST IS $10.00 PER SHOT.**

- **In 2016, MCHD's Low Cost Rabies Clinic provided vaccine to 578 pets which were vaccinated at four Rabies Clinic Sites in Montgomery County:**

CLINIC SITE	2016
Abington	147
Collegeville	123
Harleysville	115
West Norriton	193
Total	**578**

- **For more information about MCHD's Rabies Control Program, please contact the Division of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at (610) 278-5117.**

MCHD would like to take this opportunity to discuss rabies prevention. With the warm weather approaching, more residents will be outside with their pets walking or hiking on trails and in parks. These activities could place county residents at a higher risk of exposure to wild animals and/or stray animals.

What is rabies?
Rabies is a viral disease that affects the central nervous system. It can affect all mammals, including humans. It is usually transmitted to humans via the saliva of an infected animal. Rabies is a fatal disease once symptoms appear.

How is rabies spread?
Rabies is spread most often through the bite of a rabid animal. It can also be spread through a scratch from a rabid animal that breaks in the skin or through exposure of an open wound or mucous membrane (eye, nose, or mouth) to saliva from a rabid animal. In Montgomery County, rabies has been found in raccoons, bats, skunks, foxes, groundhogs, beavers, steer, cats, and dogs.

Is rabies a problem in Pennsylvania?
Rabies continues to be a significant public health problem in the Commonwealth. In the past 10 years, between 350 and 500 animals are annually confirmed in the laboratory to have rabies. In 2015, 45% of the animal rabies cases were raccoons, followed by cats (15%), bats (14.5%), skunks (11%), and

foxes (9%). In contrast to the situation in animals, human rabies in Pennsylvania is rare. The last diagnosed human case in the Commonwealth was in 1984.

All cats and dogs three months of age and older must be vaccinated against rabies. Pennsylvania State Law and the Montgomery County Public Health Code require this. Vaccinating domestic animals is an important way to prevent rabies transmission from wildlife animal reservoirs to the human population.

Many Montgomery County residents are not vaccinating their cats or dogs.
When reviewing the animal bites reported to Montgomery County in 2015, 1,308 were animal-to-human, 192 were animal-to-animal, and an additional 261 were domestic animals with a wound of unknown origin that was presumed to be caused by a suspected rabid animal. Of the domestic animals involved in human biting incidents, 62% of cats and 41% of dogs were either unvaccinated or not up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations.

What should I do if an animal bites me?
The first step in rabies prevention is to immediately wash the wound with plenty of soap and warm water, and then promptly seek medical care. If the circumstances of the exposure warrant, human rabies vaccine may be prescribed. The vaccine is a series of four shots given in the arm (or thigh for small children) on days 0, 3, 7, and 14 after presentation to the health care provider. Rabies immune globulin is also given along with the vaccine on day zero. Rabies vaccine is highly effective in preventing the disease after an exposure, if given before any symptoms develop.

- **Animal rabies remains a problem. The number of animal rabies cases reported to the Montgomery County Health Department in the last ten years are as follows:**

YEAR	ANIMAL RABIES CASES INVOLVING HUMAN OR DOMESTIC ANIMAL	
2006	10	(7 raccoons; 2 cats; 1 bat)
2007	11	(4 bats; 3 skunks; 2 raccoons; 1 groundhog; 1 steer)
2008	21	(8 skunks; 6 raccoons; 5 bats; 2 cats)
2009	14	(10 raccoons; 2 skunks; 1 fox; 1 bat)
2010	10	(5 raccoons; 3 skunks; 1 bat; 1 cat)
2011	2	(2 raccoons)
2012	15	(9 bats; 3 raccoons; 2 skunks; 1 cat)
2013	7	(3 raccoons; 1 cat; 2 bats; 1 skunk)
2014	18	(8 raccoons; 4 bats; 3 cats; 2 skunks; 1 fox)
2015	8	(7 raccoons;1 bat)
2016	4	(2 raccoons; 1 cat; 1 bat)

Currently in 2017, Montgomery County animal rabies cases reported to date are as follows:
Seven positive animal rabies cases in Montgomery County this year include 7 Raccoons: North Wales Borough (1) , Whitemarsh Township (2), Limerick Township (1), Lower Merion Township (1), Lower Gwynedd Township (1), Springfield Township (1).

The recommended precautions to prevent animal bites and possible rabies risk are:

- Do not feed, befriend, handle, or try to make pets of wild animals or stray domestic animals. Wild animals should not be handled or kept as pets.
- Vaccinate domestic dogs, cats, ferrets, and selected livestock according to your veterinarian's recommendations.
- Obey animal control ordinances, particularly not allowing domestic animals to run at large. All animals should be restrained and leashed when in public.

- If bitten by a wild or domestic animal, immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention from your doctor or hospital emergency room.
- Healthcare providers are required to report animal bites within 24 hours. Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis will be recommended to residents as necessary.