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For Immediate Release

**Health officials seek individual that may have sustained rabid raccoon bite**

Health officials with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources are seeking the public's help in locating a person driving through Pendleton County, WV that may have been bitten by a rabid raccoon on Sunday, March 4, while trying to remove it from the highway.

Bureau for Public Health Commissioner and State Health Officer Dr. Marian Swinker says local authorities have interviewed a witness who said a Caucasian adult male accompanied by a female adult and child was stopped along U.S. Route 220 holding an injured raccoon. The witness said the female adult stated that someone in the car had been bitten by the raccoon.

The group left the scene heading south on U.S. Route 220 between Franklin, WV and Monterey, VA, leaving the raccoon behind. The witness took the raccoon, which later died, to a veterinary clinic for rabies testing. The raccoon tested positive for rabies on March 6, 2012.

Dr. Swinker said, "Rabies is serious and is most always fatal once clinical signs appear. If anyone knows of this person who may have been bitten, please contact the Pendleton County Health Department at 304-358-7565 or the WV Bureau for Public Health at 304-558-5358. If you were the person who may have been bitten by a raccoon on Sunday, March 4, please seek medical attention immediately and contact the WV Bureau for Public Health at 304-558-5358."

Dr. Swinker reminds the public of the following:

- Rabies is nearly always fatal in humans once clinical signs appear.
- Prevention of rabies (known as rabies post-exposure prophylaxis) involves a series of shots given over 2 weeks and should be given soon after an exposure has occurred.
- Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis is a medical urgency.
- Persons potentially exposed to the raccoon in this situation should seek medical care as soon as possible to determine if they need rabies post-exposure prophylaxis.

To learn more about rabies go to [www.dide.wv.gov](http://www.dide.wv.gov).