

Owner protect pets from rabies

Reported by: Rebecca Baer

August 10, 2009 (WTXL-TV) FLORIDA - Rabies has become a major threat in our community, but now hundreds of pets are safe from the disease.

A vaccination clinic held Saturday had pets and their owners lining up and down the block.

It might not be pleasant for the furry patients, but a rabies shot is peace of mind for their owners.

Hundreds lined up around the block at Myers Park for an emergency clinic called in response to a rabies alert from the health department. This after several foxes in the area tested positive for the disease, and dozens reported dangerous encounters with wildlife.

"We've had over 90 victims in those 65 incidences," says Richard Ziegler of the Leon County Animal Control. "So it's a number of victims that we're dealing with as well as incidents and we've had a spark here in the Myers Park/Cascade area; the reason for the rabies alert."

Some pet owners say it was the threat of rabies that drew them to the clinic.

"We live in the woods and we do see wildlife and they do get outside," admits pet owner Carol Keyser. "So we wanted to take up the opportunity."

While others said the price, absolutely free, was right.

"I've just gotten my new dog and we knew it was like \$38 for a shot," recalls new pet owner Brian Massey. "And I heard about this on the radio and decided to come out. It's my only day off the entire week, so why not?"

And while collecting enough vaccine was a challenge for animal services, staff say they're glad to see so many responsible pet owners.

"It's very good that they took it upon themselves to get their animals vaccinated," Ziegler says. "A vaccinated animal is your first line of defense to protect the animal and their family and the community itself."

Animal pharmaceutical company Merial donated the vaccines, while the vets administering the shots donated their time.