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For Immediate Release

Local Rabies Prevention and Control Efforts Enhanced

Dickinson-Iron District Health Department Develops New Local Guide to Assist Key Community Partners

Kingsford, Michigan – September 27, 2005. The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department announced today that it has completed a year long effort to develop a revised guide to animal bite reporting, investigation and control. "Prevention and control of animal rabies is a local health department, law enforcement, medical and veterinarian responsibility in Michigan. Our community partners have strongly supported local efforts to assure protection of the public's health," said Richard J. Thoune, Health Officer.

Michigan's communicable disease reporting rules require that anyone with knowledge of humans being bitten by potentially rabid animals must report the biting incident to the local health department within 24 hours. Potentially rabid animals include pet or stray dogs, cats, and ferrets, and most wild animals like bats, raccoons, fox, skunks, coyotes, etc. To help accomplish this task, the Health Department completed a total revision of its local animal bite reporting, investigation and control guide. Over the last six months, information and training has been provided to sheriff departments, hospital emergency departments, animal shelters, physicians, law enforcement agencies, veterinarians, and city managers in both Dickinson and Iron County.

Prompt reporting of animal bites is of high importance as it facilitates early investigation, control, and management of both animals and persons potentially exposed to rabies. Rabies is an infectious viral disease that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. People can contract rabies from the bite of an animal infected with rabies. Any wild

mammal, like a raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote, or bat, can have rabies and transmit it to people. It is also possible, but quite rare, that people may get rabies if infectious material from a rabid animal, such as saliva, gets directly into their eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound.



At a recent animal bite reporting staff training for the Iron Mountain Animal Hospital staff, Richard Thoue, Director, Dickinson-Iron District Health Department, presents Dr. James Nicolas, DVM, with a *Certificate of Appreciation* in recognition of the Iron Mountain Animal Hospital's years of service and assistance to the community in the investigation, control, and prevention of animal rabies.

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