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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **OTTER IS 34th RABID ANIMAL**

**West Palm Beach, FL**—An otter was observed chasing people on Palmdale Court in the vicinity of Skees Road between Okeechobee Boulevard and Belvedere Road October 28<sup>th</sup>. Following capture, the otter was observed bleeding at the mouth, biting and charging the cage, and was missing hair on the left side of its body. The otter was confirmed positive for rabies today. There was no human exposure in this incident.

The rabies alert area continues to include all coastal regions with an eastern boundary of the Atlantic Ocean, and a western boundary along US 441 from Boca Raton to Lantana and west again to Flying Cow Road where the line goes north to Martin County. Animal Care and Control will distribute literature warning of the rabies hazard in the immediate area surrounding this incident.

The alert is the result of 34 rabid animal confirmations, mostly raccoons, this year. This latest incident represents the largest number of animal rabies since 1953 and is only the third time an otter was confirmed. A total of 14 persons have come in contact with these animals and have had to take a series of rabies shots as a precaution.

Animal Care and Control can be reached at 561-233-1200 if abnormal animal behavior is observed. If a person is bitten they should report to the nearest hospital for treatment and call the Palm Beach County Health Department at 561-840-4500. Rabies is a

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deadly viral disease that can be prevented but not cured. The virus attacks the nerves and brain tissue of warm-blooded animals including people.

Health Department Director, Jean M. Malecki, M.D. said, “ With the number of cases of rabies continuing to rise and with the coastal area on (rabies) alert I would like all people to be especially careful when outside on Halloween.”

Domestic animals, dogs and cats, over four months of age are required to be vaccinated against rabies and wear a current rabies license tag. Rabies shots are also available through a veterinarian or by calling Animal Care and Control at 561 233-1272.

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