



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

### Marching Ahead

Filing in for their first day of classes, a trio of Supply Elementary School students prepares to meet the challenges of another school year.

# Regional Rabies Epidemic Poses Threat To Brunswick Pets, People

BY ERIC CARLSON

There's a killer lurking in the woods.

Our neighbor to the north has recorded more victims than any other county in the state.

Only one South Carolina county reports more cases than our neighbor to the south.

The killer is rabies, and local health officials are frankly surprised that Brunswick County has not reported its first case of an animal being identified with the disease.

They feel certain that rabid wild animals are living within our borders and expect that it will only be a matter of time before the deadly disease is spread to a stray dog or cat, a household pet or a human.

In what is being termed a multi-state epidemic, a record 50 cases of rabies have been confirmed in North Carolina this year, more than double the number recorded by this time last year. South Carolina is running 20 cases ahead of last year, with 110 infected animals reported.

Horry County, S.C., health officials have already identified 12 animals infected with rabies this year. Columbus County leads North Carolina in the number of rabies cases among animals with 13 reported, while 10 people have had to undergo treatment for rabies.

Just two weeks ago, six residents of a trailer park near Whiteville were exposed to the disease through a stray cat. Three children and two adults were bitten or scratched while playing with the animal. One man was attacked in his home by the animal and had to shoot it to protect himself.

As in all cases of suspected rabies

## Don't Wait...Vaccinate!

The Brunswick County Health Department's Animal Control Division, in cooperation with local veterinarians, will offer low-cost rabies vaccinations at four locations on Saturday, Sept. 25.

Residents can have their dogs and cats vaccinated for \$5 per shot. The vaccinations will be offered between 9 a.m. and noon at the Brunswick Animal Hospital on U.S. 17 in Supply; from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Companion Animal Hospital in East Gate Square, Shallotte; between 8:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. at Seaside Animal Care on Carter Drive, Calabash; and at the Leland Veterinarian Hospital in Clairmont Plaza from 8 a.m. to noon.

infection, the cat's head was sent to a laboratory in Raleigh, which confirmed that the animal had contracted the disease. The six people have had to undergo a painful and expensive series of injections, which are the only known method of preventing death from rabies.

In Pineville recently, a group of children were attacked by a rabid fox that bit two five-year-olds, then turned on a mother who tried to drive the animal away. The woman said the fox sank its teeth into her leg and refused to let go as she ran into her garage.

Stories like these are typical of encounters with rabid animals, who frequently become fearless and highly aggressive under the influence of the disease, said Brunswick County Health Director Michael Rhodes. He is concerned that with reports the disease all around us, the next such incident could happen here.

"We know it's here. We just haven't had a case yet," Rhodes said. "We need to assume that it's in our wild animal population now. Because if we don't, I'm afraid

some human will contact the disease."

The best way for people to keep from being infected with rabies is to avoid contact with wild animals, and to make sure that all pets are vaccinated against the disease. Unfortunately, Rhodes estimated that only about 30 percent of Brunswick County's pet dogs and cats have been vaccinated.

Rhodes is particularly concerned that the coming of hunting season could bring more dogs in contact with wild animals as their owners take to the woods. A single bite by an infected animal could quickly spread rabies to a hunter's entire pack of dogs, requiring that they all be euthanized.

Animals carry rabies in their salivary glands and can transfer the disease through bites and scratches. The virus is then carried to the brain, where it destroys the central nervous system and causes the animal to exhibit strange and often vicious behavior.

The vast majority of rabies cases have been reported among raccoons and foxes, although bats have also

been known to carry the disease. Dogs and cats are the most common domestic carriers.

If left untreated, rabies is always fatal. Persons infected (or suspected of being infected) with the disease must undergo a four-week series of shots that can cost between \$500 and \$900, depending on body weight.

Health officials offer this advice in hopes of controlling the deadly disease:

- Have all pets vaccinated and make sure their shots are up-to-date. State law requires that dogs and cats be vaccinated against rabies.

- Report any animals that exhibit strange or aggressive behavior to county animal control personnel.

- Leave wild animals alone and instruct children to do likewise. Putting food out for raccoons could attract rabies to your back yard.

- If any animal bites or scratches you, see a doctor immediately. Do not try to capture the animal yourself. Call animal control.

- Keep a secure cover over trash or garbage that could attract animals. Put dog and cat food inside at night.

- If you are forced to shoot an animal believed to be infected with rabies, try to preserve the head. Turn the carcass over to animal control for examination and disposal.

# Bird Island Zoning Hearing Set Monday

See related story, Page 1-A  
BY LYNN CARLSON

Sunset Beach officials will host a public hearing Monday on a proposal which would limit development of Bird Island to an estimated 30 single-family homes and possibly a community center.

After almost a year of drafting and refining, Sunset Beach's town council and planning board will hear public comment on the proposal Sept. 13 at 7 p.m. at the Jones-Byrd Clubhouse, Sea Trail Plantation.

The proposal would create a "conservation reserve zone" to include the undeveloped barrier island and all the unzoned area of the island of Sunset Beach.

The zone, according to the proposal under scrutiny would provide "effective long-term management of significant, limited or irreplaceable areas" such as wetlands, undeveloped shorelines and the habitats of rare plants and animals.

Low-density single-family development would be allowed, but special permission would be required by the town's board of adjustments for a community.

As proposed, the zone could not include the restaurant, bed-and-breakfast hostel and multi-family homes featured in an early proposal by the island's owner.

The proposal seeks to limit development density to one single-family dwelling per acre of "total net buildable area" in the zone. A professional planner's study of Bird Island in August 1992 estimated it has 32.9 acres of uplands which are outside existing city and state setbacks.

Though one dwelling per acre is the total density objective, homes could be built on half-acre lots under the plan.

Permitted uses would include single-family residence, spoil sites, fences, accessory buildings, swimming pools, private noncommercial piers and docks, coastal reserves and estuarine/wildlife sanctuaries.

Special uses, permissible only with the consent of the board of adjustments, would include a community center and recreational amenities such as a swimming pool, tennis courts and a boat dock. The community center would have to be on at least one acre of land and would count as one of the total allowable units.

Additional density requirements

A public hearing on the proposed

Conservation Reserve Zoning District, including Bird Island, will be held

Monday, Sept. 13, 7 p.m., at the Jones-Byrd Clubhouse Sea Trail Plantation.

include:

- maximum lot coverage of 30 percent by buildings, accessory buildings and impervious surfaces such as driveways;
- minimum required front yard depth of 50 feet on all lots other than oceanfront. Oceanfront homes would be required to be built 65 feet from the established Coastal Area Management Act line;
- 35-foot height limit;
- maximum six bedrooms per residence.

Copies of the proposal are available for inspection at the town hall.

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## Push For Incorporation of Goretown Continues

Organizers of the proposed town of Goretown plan to seek support for its incorporation from the Black Leadership Caucus of the 7th Congressional District.

Robert Gore said Tuesday that he plans to follow up on the recommendation, which he said was made Friday night during a meeting with a representative of Congressman Charlie Rose's office.

"We're going to do that to make sure we get the type of legislative support we need for incorporation," he said.

The proposed municipality of predominantly black residents would stretch from west of Grissetown to near Calabash with irregular borders. If approved, it would become Brunswick County's 19th town. Last year three communities were con-

sidering incorporation—Northwest, Seaside and Sunset Harbor, with Rep. Thomas Wright introducing the legislation that incorporated Northwest. Support for incorporation is divided in the other two communities and local legislators took no action on the requests.

Goretown was one of several topics addressed at a community meeting held Friday night that drew a group of approximately 50 people, he said.

Odell Williamson, who represents this area on the State Transportation Board, announced that 2,700 feet of Shingletree Road had been accepted earlier that day for state maintenance.

He said the group also asked questions about Goretown and heard comments from Rep. E. David

Redwine, Sen. R.C. Soles Jr. Rep. Dewey Hill and a former state representative Ron Taylor, as well as school board member Thurman Gause and Superintendent Ralph Johnston.

"I thought the meeting went real well," said Gore.

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