



Robert P. Astorino, Westchester County Executive

NEWS RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT OFFERS RABIES PREVENTION TIPS Advice for Indoors and Out As Weather Warms Up

As summer approaches, Westchester County Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, advises residents to take a few simple precautions to prevent themselves, their families and their pets from being exposed to rabies.

“With warmer weather, residents spend more time outdoors in closer proximity to wildlife,” said Sherlita Amler, MD, commissioner of health for Westchester County. “It’s great to enjoy the outdoors, but remember to keep away from wild and stray animals, teach your children to avoid them, too and keep your pets’ rabies vaccines up to date.”

It’s equally important to keep creatures out of your home to avoid rabies exposure. So far this year, 17 residents were treated after an exposure to a bat. In 2014, 120 residents were treated. Of the 147 animals that were submitted for rabies testing through the end of May, 12 were confirmed rabid, including 8 raccoons, two bats, one fox and one skunk.

“To keep bats out of your home, check to see whether your soffits and attic vents are tightly screened,” Amler said. “If a bat gets inside, capture and contain it safely and call the Health Department immediately. That way, if you, a pet or a family member was exposed, the bat can be tested for rabies, which can help you and your family avoid a series of rabies shots.”

Watch this video to learn how to safely capture a bat in your home : <http://health.westchestergov.com/rabies>

What can you do to keep animals away from and out of your home?

- Always make sure doors and windows are secure and that any small openings that will allow an animal entrance into your home are closed off. This includes screening, chimneys, attic vents, and air conditioners.
- If a bat finds its way into your house, confine or capture it (without further exposing yourself) for possible rabies testing. Never release a bat due to the possibility of pet or human exposure. Instead, call the health department at 914-813-5000 to arrange for testing.
- Cover garbage cans securely to avoid attracting animals.
- Bring pet food and water dishes inside and don’t scatter birdseed or crumbs on the ground.
- Do not leave food outside unattended.

More

How can you tell if an animal is rabid?

- Unusual behavior may be the first sign of rabies in an animal.
- A rabid animal may become either abnormally aggressive or unusually tame.
- Staggering and frothing at the mouth are sometimes noted.

What should you do if bitten or scratched by a wild or stray animal?

- Wash the bite or scratch with warm, soapy water.
- Call your doctor or hospital to find out if additional treatment is needed.
- Report the incident to the health department, 24 hours a day, at (914) 813-5000. If calling after business hours, follow the recorded instructions for reporting public health emergencies.

What should you do if your pet fights with another animal?

- Wear gloves when handling your pet during and after an encounter with another animal.
- Call your veterinarian and the animal control officer in your community to report the incident.
- If your pet is exposed to a suspect rabid animal, try to keep the animal in sight until the police or a wildlife trapper arrive.
- If your pet bites or scratches someone, confine your animal and call the Westchester County Health Department immediately at 813-5000. There are a few simple procedures to follow so that the injured person does not need rabies post-exposure treatment. You should also contact the veterinarian for your pet's rabies vaccine records.

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