



Hunterdon County Department of Health



www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/health.html

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hunterdon Health Department: Rabies Protection Steps

Flemington - The Hunterdon County Health Department reports an increase in the number of positive rabies cases in wildlife animals this summer and reminds residents to avoid contact with stray or wild animals. **From January 1- July 10, there are 15 positive animal rabies cases in Hunterdon County, compared to 10 cases in 2018. The animals that tested positive this year include: Coyote, bat, cat, groundhog, racoon, and skunk.**

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus. The virus is found in the saliva of a rabid animal and is transmitted by a bite, or possibly by saliva of an open cut or the eyes. The disease is transmitted from animals to humans or from animals to other animals. Left untreated, rabies attacks the nervous system and causes death.

“As we enter the warm summer months, we spend more time outdoors and see more wildlife around our homes. It is important to remember that animals in the wild may be infected with rabies and we should take precautions to keep family and pets healthy” stated Karen DeMarco, Health Officer for Hunterdon County.

Only mammals, including people, can get rabies. Rabies occurs most often in wildlife, particularly raccoons, bats, skunks, groundhogs, and foxes. These animals represent 95% of the cases in the United States. In New Jersey (NJ), cats account for the vast majority of domestic animal rabies cases. Dogs, other domestic pets and livestock can also become infected so take measures to keep wild animals from entering houses, barns and garages. Small rodents such as rats, mice, chipmunks, and squirrels are rarely infected.

These steps should be taken to protect ourselves from rabies:

- Vaccinate dogs, cats, ferrets, horses and other selected livestock for rabies and keep vaccinations current.
- Report any unusual animal behavior to your local animal control officer
(Unusual animal behaviors include but are not limited to: bats active during daylight hours, excessive drooling or foaming at the mouth, aggressive behaviors)

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- Avoid contact with stray and wild animals. Do not feed or touch wild animals
- Keep pets under supervision in a yard or on a leash to minimize contact with wild animals.
- Teach children to never approach unfamiliar dogs, cats or wildlife, even if they appear friendly.
- Report all animal bites immediately to the Hunterdon county Health Department at 908-788-1351.
- Treat animal bites with soap and water and contact a medical professional immediately.

There is no known cure for rabies, however post exposure prophylaxis (vaccinations) are available. If you have been bitten by an animal or may have been exposed to rabies contact your healthcare provider immediately.

For more information please visit <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/rabies.shtml>