



## Jefferson County PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Public Health Facility, 531 Meade Street, Watertown, New York 13601

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### PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Faith Lustik, Health Planner  
(315) 786-3723

## Skunk in City of Watertown Reported to Have Rabies

**Watertown, NY ~December 4, 2019~** The New York State Department of Health laboratory has reported to the Jefferson County Public Health Service (JCPHS) that a skunk has tested positive for rabies. This skunk was located on Monroe Avenue in Watertown where it was dispatched by the Watertown Police Department and submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture for testing. There were no human or domestic animal exposures reported.

Rabies is a fatal disease that attacks the brain and spinal cord. It can take several weeks to several months for rabies symptoms to appear. Early treatment after an exposure can prevent rabies in humans and in pets who are up to date on vaccination. Any mammal can get rabies, but it is most often seen in bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes. Animals with rabies may be aggressive, sick or unusually friendly. Please take these steps to help prevent the spread of rabies:

1. Teach children to stay away from unfamiliar animals, either wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. Remind them to tell you if they have any unusual contact with an animal.
2. **Do not feed stray or wild animals.** This attracts them to your home increasing the risk of transmission of disease to people and pets.
3. Do not leave pet food outside as it attracts wildlife to your home.
4. Wash any wound from an animal encounter thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention immediately.
5. Be a responsible pet owner by keeping your pet's vaccinations current. Getting your pet vaccinated by your vet or at a clinic can help stop the spread of rabies from wild animals to humans.
6. Monitor your pet when they are outside. If your pet is involved in an altercation with a wild animal, do not get in between them. Do not touch your pet without gloves as rabies is spread through saliva. Cover your pet with a towel and contact your vet as your pet may need a booster shot.

~END~