



JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

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

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October 12, 2023

Skunk in Town of Champion Reported to Have Rabies

The New York State Department of Health laboratory has reported to the Jefferson County Public Health Service that a skunk has tested positive for rabies. The skunk was found inside a dog kennel in the Town of Champion. There were no known human exposures; however, an 8 month old puppy was inside the dog kennel and exposed. The dog was not vaccinated against rabies and was euthanized.

Dogs, cats and domesticated ferrets must be at least 3 months of age to receive their first rabies vaccination and must have the initial shot no later than 4 months after birth according to New York State Health Law. If the initial rabies vaccination is given during that time frame, then an exposed pet would receive a booster dose and kept under observation.

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 do not have to be aggressive or behave erratically to have rabies. Changes in any animal's normal behavior can be early signs of rabies.

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 leave pet food outside as it attracts wildlife to your home.
3. Wash any wound from an animal encounter thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention immediately.
4. Be a responsible pet owner by keeping your pet's vaccinations current – even strictly indoor pets. Getting your pet vaccinated by your vet or at a clinic (Petco, Tractor Supply and Pet Supplies Plus offer rabies vaccination clinics) can help stop the spread of rabies from wild animals to humans. JCPHS is hosting a **rabies vaccination clinic on Thursday, October 19 5:00 – 7:00pm at Jefferson County Dog Control**. Visit www.jcphs.org for more information.
5. 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~