

**JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE**Public Health Facility, 531 Meade Street, Watertown, New York 13601

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Raccoon in Jefferson County Reported to Have Rabies

The New York State Department of Health rabies laboratory has reported to the Jefferson County Public Health Service (JCPHS) that a raccoon has tested positive for rabies. The raccoon was located in the City of Watertown and was submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for testing. There were no known human or pet exposures.

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. Getting your pet vaccinated by your vet or at a clinic (check with your local pet supply store) can help stop the spread of rabies from wild animals to humans.
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~