



# Northeast District Department of Health

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Rabies Awareness a Priority for Protecting Public Health**

Health Department Issues Reminder to Stay Away from Stray Animals

BROOKLYN – Warmer weather and longer days mean more time spent outdoors, which increases the risk of coming in contact with unfamiliar domestic and wild animals.

“If it’s a stray, stay away,” is the primary message of rabies prevention,” said Susan Starkey, Director of Health for the Northeast District Department of Health (NDDH). “Traditionally, reports of rabies exposures often peak during spring and summer months, but we want people to know that rabies is a year-round threat. Everyone should take precautions to reduce their risk of exposure.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rabies is a preventable viral disease of mammals most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The vast majority of rabies cases occur in wild animals like raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes. The rabies virus infects the central nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death.

“NDDH receives reports year round of people coming in contact with raccoons, skunks, foxes, bats, stray cats, and other animals” explained NDDH Public Health Nurse Nancy Beaudry. “If a person has been bitten, or if the saliva of a potentially rabid animal comes in contact with a person’s eyes, nose, mouth, or open wounds, it is important to seek medical treatment and contact the health department right away so we can provide guidance and information to any exposed individuals.”

Public health works to keep people safe from exposure to rabies. Agencies such as the Department of Agriculture and animal control officers are charged with rabies management and response for domestic animals and the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection handles issues concerning wildlife such as biting/attack incidents, wildlife management and rehabilitation.

“There are many partners in rabies prevention; each one taking a different role in rabies management and response,” commented Linda Colangelo, NDDH Education and Communications Coordinator. “NDDH works with veterinarians, animal control officers, nuisance wildlife control operators, physicians, emergency responders, shelter personnel, state and local law enforcement, and of course, members of the public to conduct thorough investigations when a person is thought to have been exposed to the rabies virus.”

To stay safe, NDDH advises:

- Stay away from wild animals, strays, and domestic animals that are unfamiliar to you. This includes touching, holding, transporting, feeding, or caring for a stray.
- Seek medical treatment immediately if you've been bitten. Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and lots of water. Your physician will determine if you need anti-rabies treatment.
- Report the incident immediately to your local health department so they can conduct an investigation and provide proper notification and information to exposed individuals
- Wear heavy leather gloves if handling a pet that has been involved in an altercation with a wild or unfamiliar animal; isolate the pet from contact with other pets and people for a minimum of several hours; and wash your hands well following the incident. Avoid direct contact with any saliva or brain/nervous tissue.
- Pet owners should assure that all of their pets, whether indoor or outdoor animals are current on all vaccinations, which are required by law.
- If you bring your pet to the veterinarian after an animal attack, the vet may ask you about any human exposures. They should direct you to contact the local health department.
- Bats have small teeth that may leave marks not easily seen. There are certain circumstances when a person might not be aware or able to tell if a bite has occurred. This includes if a sleeping person awakens to find a bat in the room; or if an adult witnesses a bat in a room with a previously unattended child; an intellectually or developmentally disabled person or an intoxicated person. Medical attention is recommended for any of these situations. In all circumstances, contact local or state health departments for assistance with medical advice and testing bats for rabies.
- Multiple agencies can be involved in a rabies case. This includes the local health department, local animal control officers, nuisance wildlife control operators, veterinarians, State testing laboratories, the CT Department of Public Health, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and the CT Department of Agriculture. *Be sure to share accurate details so all authorities can conduct proper investigations.*

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## **Important Phone Numbers for Rabies Information or Exposure Reporting**

### **To report a wild animal attack on humans:**

Northeast District Department of Health – 860-774-7350

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Wildlife Division – 860-424-3333

(Note – DEEP Environmental Conservation Police Officers will only be available in cases when an aggressive animal has attacked a person or domestic animal and the attacking animal is present. Officers are not available to respond to bats in living spaces or most calls of wildlife behaving abnormally. In these cases, contact a licensed Nuisance Control Wildlife Operator, a local Animal Control Officer or local police.)

### **To report a domestic animal attack on a human:**

Contact your town Animal Control Officer (See below)

Northeast District Department of Health – 860-774-7350

### **To report a wild animal attack on a domestic animal:**

Contact your local Animal Control Officer (See below)

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Wildlife Division – 860-424-3333

[http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&q=325944&deepNav\\_GID=1655#RabiesInfo](http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2723&q=325944&deepNav_GID=1655#RabiesInfo)

### **For more information about rabies:**

- Contact your local Animal Control Officer
- Northeast District Department of Health – 860-774-7350 / [www.nddh.org](http://www.nddh.org)
- Connecticut Department of Public Health – [www.ct.gov/dph/rabies](http://www.ct.gov/dph/rabies)
- Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Wildlife Div. – 860-424-3011 – [www.ct.gov/deep](http://www.ct.gov/deep) (This website includes a directory of licensed Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators.)
- Department of Agriculture, Animal Control Division – 860-713-2506 – [www.ct.gov/doag](http://www.ct.gov/doag)
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website - <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies>
- CDC Healthy Pets/Healthy People website - <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/index.html>

### **Animal Control Officers (ACO) for the Northeast District Department of Health area:**

Northeast CT Council of Governments  
(NECCOG) Animal Services covers:  
Brooklyn, Canterbury, Hampton, Killingly,  
Pomfret, Putnam, Sterling, Woodstock and is  
temporarily covering the town of Thompson.  
Call 860-774-1253.

<http://necog.org/animal-services/>

### **Town Animal Control Officers (ACO):**

Eastford	860-377-6635
Plainfield	860-564-8547
Thompson	860-923-1055
NECCOG	860-774-1253
Union	860-306-0573