

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FREE RABIES VACCINES FOR WESTCHESTER PETS MAY 5

(New Rochelle, NY) – Westchester County residents can bring their dogs, cats and ferrets in for free rabies vaccinations on **Sunday, May 5 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Stamen Animal Hospital, 61 Quaker Ridge Road, New Rochelle.** No appointments are needed, but residents are advised to bring proof of prior rabies vaccinations for their pets. Call 914-632-1269 for more information.

An adult must supervise all pets. Cats and ferrets must be in carriers and dogs must be on a leash. Aggressive dogs must be muzzled. No examinations will be given.

Westchester County Health Commissioner, Sherlita Amler, MD said: “Vaccinating your pet against rabies will protect your pet and your family in case your pet has had contact with a rabid or potentially rabid animal.”

Additional free rabies clinics will be scheduled and announced in the coming months, in other parts of the County.

Under New York State law, dogs and cats must receive their first rabies vaccine no later than four months after birth. A second rabies shot must be given within one year of the first vaccine, with additional booster shots given every one or three years after that, depending on the vaccine used. Owners who fail to get their pets vaccinated and keep vaccinations up-to-date may be fined up to \$2,000.

Rabies is a fatal disease that spreads through the bite or saliva of infected animals. Those animals most commonly infected are raccoons, skunks, bats and foxes. However, domestic animals such as cats and dogs are also at risk because they can easily contract rabies from wild or stray animals.

A pet that is up-to-date with rabies vaccinations would only need a booster dose of vaccine within five days of the pet’s exposure to a known or suspect rabid animal. Animals not up-to-date with rabies vaccinations would be quarantined or euthanized following contact with a rabid or suspect-rabid animal.

A change in an animal's behavior is often the first sign of rabies. A rabid animal may become either abnormally aggressive or unusually tame. It may lose fear of people and become docile, or become excited and irritable. Infected animals sometimes stagger, spit and froth at the mouth. Children should be discouraged from touching unfamiliar animals, and tell an adult right away if they have been bitten or scratched by an animal.

All animal bites or contacts with animals suspected of having rabies must be reported to the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000. After hours, callers should follow instructions in the recorded message for reporting public health emergencies, 24-hours a day.

To learn more about rabies and its prevention, visit the [Health Department's website](#).

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