



**Kenneth W. Jenkins**  
Westchester County Executive

## News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Contact: Catherine Cioffi**  
**Communications Director**  
**Office - (914) 995-2932**  
**Cell- (914) 954 -5579**  
[CCioffi@WestchesterCountyNY.gov](mailto:CCioffi@WestchesterCountyNY.gov)

### **WESTCHESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT MARKS RABIES AWARENESS MONTH IN JUNE**

(White Plains, NY) – During Rabies Awareness Month, the Westchester County Health Department encourages residents to protect themselves, their family and their pets from this deadly disease by keeping pet cats, dogs and ferrets up-to-date on their rabies vaccines and boosters, avoiding stray and wild animals and bat-proofing their home.

Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler said: “Please do not touch sick or injured animals, no matter how vulnerable they appear and teach this to your children, too. Instead, call your local police or animal control officer for help. Securely cover trash cans and keep pet food and water indoors to discourage wild animals from visiting your property. Do not approach or handle animals that you don’t know.”

Bats sometimes carry rabies. To keep bats out of your home, caulk any openings larger than a quarter-inch by a half-inch. Use window screens and chimney caps and fill electrical and plumbing holes with stainless steel wool or caulk. Ensure all exterior doors close tightly. Should a bat get into your home, capture and contain it and call the Health Department immediately at 914-813-5000 if it was in a room with a sleeping person or there is a chance of exposure so that the bat can be tested for rabies.

To learn how to safely capture a bat in your home, visit <https://health.westchestergov.com/rabies/rabies-in-bats>. To remove an animal from inside your home, a list of certified trappers is available [here](#).

Last year, the County Health Department tested 364 animals that may have had contact with people or pets. Just 19 were confirmed to be rabid, including 11 bats, 5 raccoons, one cat, one skunk and a fox. Nearly 300 people were referred for post-exposure rabies treatment.

Amler added: “If you, your child or your pet are bitten or scratched by someone else’s pet, get the name and address of the owner so that the biting pet’s rabies vaccine records can be verified. That way, the bite victim may be able to avoid a series of rabies shots.”

Residents who are concerned about an animal behaving erratically outdoors should contact their local police department or animal control officer. Rabies can make an animal extra-aggressive or extra-tame, passive and lethargic. An animal may stagger around.

Anyone who is bitten or scratched by a wild or stray animal should wash the area with warm soapy water, call their doctor and report the incident to the Health Department, 24-hours a day, at (914) 813-5000. If after hours, follow the recorded instructions to report a public health emergency.

If your pet fights with another animal, wear gloves when handling your animal, call your vet and the animal control officer in your community. If your pet is exposed to a suspect rabid animal, try to keep the animal in sight until the police or a trapper arrives.

If your pet bites or scratches someone, confine your pet and call the Health Department immediately. Be sure to keep your pet's rabies vaccines current as required by state law and call your vet to verify their vaccine records.

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