**NEWS RELEASE**

Sherlita Amler, MD, Commissioner, Department of Health  
Ned McCormack, Communications Director  
Contact: Caren Halbfinger (914) 813-5013 / after hours: 813-5000  
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**RABIES ALERT – RACCOONS LEFT ON HEALTH DEPARTMENT DOORSTEP**

Health commissioner asks that the person who was caring for them come forward for rabies evaluation.  

Media Availability: Sherlita Amler, MD, will answer questions about this at 12:45 at the health department office at 145 Huguenot Street, New Rochelle, 7th floor.  

To confirm you will attend, please email back Caren Halbfinger at cqh4@westchestergov.com

The Westchester County Department of Health is asking the person or persons who left five baby raccoons on the doorstep of the health department’s office in Mount. Kisco this morning to contact the department of health immediately at (914) 813-5000 to assess their need for lifesaving rabies treatment.

“The raccoons were left on our doorstep in a cage with bottles of milk, blankets and toys,” said Dr. Sherlita Amler, commissioner of health. “They appear to have been well cared for and nurtured, which means that there was direct contact between these raccoons and the person or people who were caring for them. That’s why it’s important that we talk to the individual or individuals who left them to determine if they may have been potentially exposed to rabies.”

At this time, the baby raccoons appear to be healthy and are being placed with a certified wildlife animal rehabilitator, where they will remain in hopes that their caregiver can be located and evaluated. The only way to confirm an animal has rabies is by euthanizing it and testing its brain tissue, a step the health department is trying to avoid.

Rabies is a fatal disease that is spread 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. Anyone bitten by a rabid animal, or having contact with its saliva, may need to receive post-exposure rabies vaccination.

Unusual behavior may be the first sign of rabies in an animal. A rabid animal may become either abnormally aggressive or unusually tame. It may lose fear of people and become excited and irritable, or, conversely appear particularly passive and lethargic. Staggering and frothing at the mouth are sometimes noted.

Direct contact with wild or stray animals, even baby animals, is not advisable. Parents should teach children not to touch unfamiliar animals and to immediately tell an adult if they have been bitten or scratched by an animal. Any physical contact with a wild or unfamiliar animal should be reported to a health care provider. All animal bites or contacts with animals suspected of having rabies must be reported to the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000, 24 hours a day.

Keeping pet rabies vaccinations up to date is also important for protection against rabies. New York State law requires that dogs, cats and ferrets to be vaccinated against rabies and receive regular booster shots. For more information about rabies
and its prevention, visit the Health Department’s website at www.westchestergov.com/health. Residents can also like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wchealthdept and follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/wchealthdept.