



Municipality of Princeton

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Rabies in Wildlife Continues to Pose Risks to Pets, People

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Princeton, NJ – The Princeton Health Department wants to remind residents that rabies in wildlife continues to pose a risk to pets and people. Rabies is almost always 100 percent fatal once a person or animal begins to show symptoms. Protecting pets by keeping them current on their rabies vaccine is an important buffer between wildlife rabies and human exposure. Indoor animals should also be vaccinated as rabid bats are frequently discovered by pets in the home.

“Princeton had the highest number of animals (n=7, 2 raccoons / 5 bats) testing positive for rabies in Mercer County in 2014. Protecting your pets by keeping them current on their rabies vaccine is an important defense between wildlife rabies and human exposure. It is important to remember that cats, as well as dogs, should be vaccinated for rabies. Not only does the vaccine keep your pet safe, but it can help keep you and your family safe as well” said Princeton Health Officer Jeff Grosser.

In addition to vaccinating pets for rabies, there are several things Princeton residents can do to protect themselves and their pets.

- Avoid wildlife and animals you do not know.
- Keep pets on a leash. Do not allow your pet to roam; it can come in contact with rabid wildlife.
- Never feed or touch wild or stray animals, especially stray cats, bats, skunks, raccoons, foxes or groundhogs.
- Teach your children that they should tell you if they were bitten or scratched by an animal.
- Call your doctor and the local health department, if bitten or exposed to saliva or blood.
- Contact your veterinarian if your pet was exposed to a bat, raccoon, skunk, or other wild carnivore.
- Perform a 360 degree “walk around” of your home. Look for openings in the exterior bats can use as an entry point. 3/8”-1” opening is all they need so look closely. Openings should be closed only after it’s determines no bats are inside of the home/attic.

Dogs and cats receiving an initial rabies vaccination are not considered immunized until 28 days after the vaccine has been administered, therefore it is strongly recommended that any animal newly vaccinated or those too young to receive the vaccine (less than three months) not be left outdoors unattended.

According to the 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 reported to the CDC each year from New Jersey occur in wild animals like raccoons, skunks, and bats.

Every year an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 Americans are potentially exposed to rabies, requiring costly and uncomfortable human rabies post-exposure prophylaxis. Post exposure treatment requires

administration of Human Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG) and four vaccinations over the course of two weeks, costs of which might not be covered by health insurance.

Additional information is available online at:

http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/fag/rabies_faq.pdf

<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/#Wild%20Animals>

For more information, please contact the Princeton Health Department at (609) 497-7608