

**Township of Hanover  
Wildlife Rabies  
Be Cautious Around Wildlife And Stay Away If It Appears Sick**

Raccoon rabies entered New Jersey in the fall of 1989 and has since spread throughout the entire State and continues to create a threat to residents and their domestic animals. Although approximately 75 percent of the animals confirmed to be rabid through laboratory testing are raccoons, many other animals (especially skunks, groundhogs, foxes, and free-roaming cats) also have become infected after exposure to raccoons.

Once symptoms of rabies in a person develop, there is no known effective cure for this disease. Rabies immunizations are effective in preventing rabies if given in a timely manner following exposure to a rabid animal.

Rabies is fatal if not treated. The rabies virus can be transmitted by a bite or scratch from a rabid animal. Common carriers of the virus are mammals including raccoons, skunks, foxes, woodchucks and bats. You are advised to stay away from wild animals and animals that you do not know. **DO NOT FEED STRAY ANIMALS INCLUDING FERAL CATS.** Do not make pets of wild animals. Please keep garbage in a container with a tight fitting lid to prevent attracting animals. Do not leave pet food out for extended time periods. Please be certain that your cat or dog is properly vaccinated and up to date on rabies vaccinations. Be certain that your cat or dog is properly licensed, and is wearing their license tag.

Dogs and cats which have been fighting with raccoons, skunks, groundhogs, or foxes may have saliva on their fur which could be a source of human exposure to rabies. The rabies virus can remain alive in saliva until the saliva dries completely. Human exposure can occur if wet saliva from a rabid animal comes into contact with an open wound (one which has been bleeding within the last 24 hours) or a mucous membrane (i.e., eyes). This may occur when a pet is handled immediately after fighting with a wild animal if saliva from the suspect rabid animal is on the fur. If the dog or cat's fur was dry, then contact with your pet would not constitute a rabies exposure.

To prevent exposure to rabies, it is recommended that dogs and cats with saliva-contaminated fur not be touched with bare hands until the saliva has totally dried. If the pet is injured or must be handled after fighting with a suspect rabid animal, rubber gloves should be worn by the handlers and their hands should be washed with soap and water afterwards. Pet owners can put on rubber gloves and carefully wash the pet off, or once the saliva has dried (usually within two hours), the pet can be handled or bathed safely without gloves. People who may have had contact with saliva from a known or suspect rabid animal should wash immediately and contact the Health Department (973-515-6667) and their physician to determine if anti-rabies treatment is indicated.

The State Department of Health and Senior Services is frequently questioned about the rabies exposure risk to people licked by their dog after the dog was recently exposed to a rabid animal. The only time this would be considered a potential risk is if the dog licks a person immediately (within a minute or less) after exposure to the rabid animal and the saliva contaminates an open wound, cut or mucous membranes. Later contact with oral secretions from the dog would not be considered a rabies exposure.

**Remember, the best way of protecting yourself and your family against rabies is to avoid touching wild animals and have your pets properly vaccinated and licensed. If your pet has been in contact with a wild animal (i.e. raccoon, skunk, bat, groundhog, fox, etc.) you must notify the Health Department at 973-515-6667.**

**If you are exposed (either bitten or scratched) by any suspect animal act promptly. Immediately wash the bite wound with soap and water and call your doctor and the Health Department. If your pet is involved with a suspect animal contact the Health Department and your Veterinarian.**

**If you see sick animals (i.e. raccoon, skunk, fox, feral cat, groundhog, bat) or you or your pet is attacked by wildlife please immediately contact the Township of Hanover Police Department at 973-428-2512.**