



Eastern Highlands Health District

4 South Eagleville Road ♦ Mansfield CT 06268 ♦ Tel: (860) 429-3325 ♦ Fax: (860) 429-3321

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rabies Advisory

Recently the Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD) received a confirmed report that an area resident was exposed to rabies through the bite of a wild animal. While this resident is now undergoing post-exposure immunizations and no longer at risk, the Eastern Highlands Health District nonetheless is taking the opportunity to remind residents to protect themselves, and their families against the risk of rabies exposures.

Rabies is a viral disease that is fatal once clinical symptoms appear. It is found in the brain and spinal cord of infected mammals and transmitted via the saliva of infected animals primarily through bites and scratches. It only affects mammals. Rabies is found throughout the United States and the world. In the US and here in CT, rabies can be found primarily in infected wildlife. Although the number of cases of rabies has declined, there continues to be animals that test positive. From 2014 to 2018, 16 animals tested positive for the rabies virus within the Eastern Highlands Health District. The wild life species that are of greatest concern in CT are **Bats, Raccoons, Skunk, and Fox.**

Being informed and aware can help residents reduce their risk of rabies exposure.

What You Can do to Help Control Rabies

- **Protect your pets and vaccinate your pets against rabies.** It is the law in Connecticut that cats and dogs should be vaccinated against rabies.
- **Never let your pets roam.** Keep pets safe and don't let them roam.
- **Do not leave food out for wild animals.** Wild animals should not be encouraged to be in or around your house.
- **Report wild animals acting strangely.** Report wild animals acting strangely to local police or the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Do not try and approach the animal. Further, if you observe a wild animal during day light hours, like a raccoon or skunk, it may be sick and should be avoided (It is against CT law to own a wild animal).
- **Wild animals, including bats, should be kept out of dwellings.** Close small openings that wildlife may use to gain entrance. For further information on nuisance wildlife contact DEEP (<https://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?A=2723&Q=325944>)
- **Wear gloves when handling a pet who might have been exposed to rabies.** When handling a pet who may have been bitten or exposed to rabies wear gloves and wash your pet. Consult the local Animal Control Officer and your veterinarian for further advice.



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If You are Bitten

- **Wash any wound thoroughly with soap and water.** To reduce the chance of infection use soap and running water to clean your wound. Provide first aid as you would with any wound.
- **Seek medical care if bitten any animal, wild or domestic.** Seek medical attention if bitten or scratched, making sure to provide all the information about how you got the bite. Adhere to the treatment recommended by the medical provider; **early treatment saves lives.** (<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/rabies/index.html>). If your pet is bitten, seek the advice of a veterinarian and contact the local Animal Control Officer.
- **Report any bite by a domestic animal to your local animal control officer.**
- **If any human or pet is bitten by a wild animal, for testing try to capture or restrain the wild animal without risking further exposure.** The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) advises people when trying to capture a wild animal to reduce their risk of further exposure by **wearing gloves and avoiding skin contact.** Contact the DEEP for more advice on wildlife restraint.

Tests and Diagnosis: Diagnosing rabies in animals requires that the animal be euthanized, as it is necessary to obtain samples from the animal's brain. If you suspect a captured animal has rabies, report the capture to DEEP, or the health district.

For questions about human exposure, contact the Health District at 860-429-3325, or the Department of Public Health Epidemiology and Emerging Infections Program at [860-509-7994](tel:860-509-7994).

For questions about domestic animal exposure, contact the Department of Agriculture, Animal Control Division at [860-713-2506](tel:860-713-2506).

For questions about wildlife contact The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Wildlife division at [860-424-3011](tel:860-424-3011)

Follow the steps above to minimize the risks for you and your family. For more information, please go to the Center for Disease Control's rabies web page at <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/> or Eastern Highlands Health District <http://www.ehhd.org/>, or phone: 860-429-3325.