



JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Public Health Facility, 531 Meade Street, Watertown, New York 13601

Contact: Lisa Lagos, 315.786.3735

June 7, 2023

Bat in City of Watertown Reported to Have Rabies

The New York State Department of Health laboratory has reported to the Jefferson County Public Health Service that a bat has tested positive for rabies. The bat was located inside a home in the City of Watertown. There were no known human exposures; however, a pet cat was exposed. The cat was not vaccinated against rabies and must be euthanized.

Rabies is a fatal disease that attacks the brain and spinal cord. It can take several weeks to several months for rabies symptoms to appear. Early treatment after an exposure can prevent rabies in humans and in pets who are up to date on vaccination. Any mammal can get rabies, but it is most often seen in bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes. Animals do not have to be aggressive or behave erratically to have rabies. Changes in any animal's normal behavior can be early signs of rabies.

Bats that are on the ground, unable to fly, or active during the day are more likely than others to be rabid. Even so, when any bat is found in a room with a child unattended or with any sleeping or incapacitated person, the bat needs to be tested for rabies. **If you find a bat in your home, try to safely contain it.** Wait for the bat to land. Wearing gloves, cover the bat with a small container. Slide a piece of cardboard under the container and tape it closed. Call JCPHS for further guidance. Keep bats out of your home by closing up any holes that might allow bats entry into your living quarters. For more information, [click here](#).

Please take these steps to help prevent the spread of rabies:

1. Teach children to stay away from unfamiliar animals, either wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. Remind them to tell you if they have any unusual contact with an animal.
2. Do not leave pet food outside as it attracts wildlife to your home.
3. Wash any wound from an animal encounter thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention immediately.
4. Be a responsible pet owner by keeping your pet's vaccinations current – even strictly indoor pets. Getting your pet vaccinated by your vet or at a clinic (Petco, Tractor Supply and Pet Supplies Plus offer rabies vaccination clinics) can help stop the spread of rabies from wild animals to humans. JCPHS is hosting a rabies vaccination clinic on Thursday, June 15 5:00 – 7:00pm at Jefferson County Dog Control. Visit www.jcphs.org for more information.
5. Monitor your pet when they are outside. If your pet is involved in an altercation with a wild animal, do not get in between them. Do not touch your pet without gloves as rabies is spread through saliva. Cover your pet with a towel and contact your vet as your pet may need a booster shot.

~End~