



# COUNTY of CUMBERLAND

## *Public Information Office*

Mitzi R. Champion  
Public Information Director

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

*Contact Sgt. Jonny Smith, Public Information  
Cumberland County Animal Control  
321-6851*

## **Second Confirmed Case of Rabies in Cumberland County**

The State Public Health Laboratory confirmed that an injured raccoon, found by a pet owner in the Massy Hill area, tested positive for rabies. The raccoon was found in the pet owner's backyard next to his dog. The dog had apparently fought with the raccoon and had not been vaccinated against rabies. The dog was euthanized as required by state law.

Don't let this happen to your pet. It is required by state law all dogs and cats aged 4 months and above must be vaccinated against rabies. This is required not only for the protection of your pet, but also for the safety of pet owners and the general public. Failure to get pets vaccinated is punishable by a fine of \$ 100 per unvaccinated pet.

Rabies continues to pose a threat to pets and residents in Cumberland County. It can appear at any time and in any place. Residents must remain alert for abnormal behavior in wildlife and pets and report all animal bites and contact between pets and wildlife.

Rabies is a virus that attacks the brain and nervous system. It can infect all mammals and is seen mostly in bats, skunks, raccoons and other wild animals. People can also get the disease from an infected animal. Rabies is a potentially life threatening illness in people and is usually fatal in animals. The good news for humans is that there are effective treatments available for rabies if they are received soon after being exposed to the illness.

The first sign of rabies in animals is a change in behavior. Animals become aggressive, attacking for no reason, or they may become very quiet. Wild animals can lose their fear of people and act tame. Rabid animals may walk in a circle, drag a leg, or fall over. Some cannot swallow so they are not able to eat or drink and often drool. Animals usually die within a week after first becoming ill.

Avoiding wild animals and keeping your distance from stray dogs and cats is the first step in preventing an animal bite. Any pet which appears to have been in a fight while outside should be handled very cautiously and seen by a veterinarian.

If you are bitten by an animal:

- Immediately wash the wound with lots of soap and water.
- Call your doctor.
- Capture the animal, if you can do it safely, or get the name and address of the animal's owner.
- If the biting animal subsequently dies or is already dead, wear gloves or use a shovel to move the animal. Put the animal's body in a heavy duty plastic bag and place it in a cold place away from people and other animals.
- Call the Cumberland County Health Department to report the bite. The Health Department will ask for details from the bite incident and a description of the biting animal.