



JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

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

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August 26, 2025

Bobcat in Town of Theresa Reported to Have Rabies

Watertown, NY – The New York State Department of Health Wadsworth laboratory has reported to the Jefferson County Public Health Service (JCPHS) that a bobcat has tested positive for rabies. The bobcat entered a residence through an open door and attacked two people in the Town of Theresa. The bobcat was dispatched. JCPHS submitted the bobcat for rabies testing. The two people have begun preventative rabies treatment. There are no known domestic animal exposures.

This is the thirteenth animal to test positive for rabies in Jefferson County this year. So far in 2025, two foxes and ten raccoons also tested positive for rabies.

Rabies in bobcats is very rare. Bobcats will normally avoid humans and are typically active at night. Rabies signs in bobcats could include extreme aggression, foaming at the mouth, paralysis or weakness. Admire wildlife from a distance.

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.

Rabies cases have been identified across Jefferson County. Therefore, any unknown animal could have rabies. Avoid contact with unknown animals, including possible stray pets, as they may not have been vaccinated against rabies.

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 Tuesday, August 26 6:00pm – 8:00pm at the Deferiet Village DPW**. Visit www.jcphs.org for more information and other clinic dates.
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.