

**JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE**

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

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Stray Cat Reported to Have Rabies in Jefferson County

Watertown, NY – The New York State Department of Health Wadsworth laboratory has reported to the Jefferson County Public Health Service (JCPHS) that a cat has tested positive for rabies. The stray cat was found injured with visible wounds in the City of Watertown. A member of the public helped get the cat to a veterinarian for medical care. Weeks later, the cat developed neurological symptoms consistent with rabies infection and was taken back to the veterinarian where its health further deteriorated, and it was euthanized. The cat was submitted by JCPHS for rabies testing. There are two known human exposures. Those individuals will undergo preventative rabies treatment. There are no known pet exposures.

This is the twenty-second animal to test positive for rabies in Jefferson County this year. So far in 2025, two foxes, one bobcat, one bat, two skunks and fifteen raccoons also tested positive for rabies. These positive rabies cases have been mapped by municipality and can be found online at:

<https://www.jeffersoncountynv.gov/rabies-control>

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.
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~