



**HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**
Public Health Unit

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Second Skunk in Westport tests positive for rabies virus

Elizabethtown, NY.

This week a second skunk in the Township of Westport tested positive with rabies. This skunk was within approximately 2 miles of the first positive skunk. Skunk movement can vary based on environment, habitat, food sources, population densities, mating and general behaviors for skunk. Skunk are typically nocturnal, slow-moving, nonaggressive, and opportunistic omnivores.

To prevent skunks from finding your property attractive for food or shelter:

- Bury fencing 1.5 to 2 feet underground and bend 6 inches underground at a 90-degree angle.
- Place bee hives at least 3 feet high.
- Remove obvious sources of food and store food in metal or thick plastic containers with lids.
- Cover openings to food sources, including composting, with wire mesh.
- Be aware that barns and outbuildings where small rodents live are inviting to skunk.

“In this instance there were likely livestock exposures. We know residents and farmers within the Township of Westport will be concerned,” said Jessica Darney Buehler, Director of Health Planning and Promotion. “So our Health Department is actively communicating with the property owner and other experts at Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Essex County, NYS Department of Health, NYS Agriculture and Markets, NYS DEC and USDA to ensure the safest handling of this instance.”

Director of Public Health, Linda Beers, said “Our focus is prevention and protection. Please get pets and livestock vaccinated for rabies and avoid contact with wildlife; most importantly those not acting normally for their species.”

The Health Department offers free rabies clinics through the county several times each year to help people meet NYS rules requiring pet dogs, cats and ferrets to be vaxed for rabies by 4 months of age.

The 2024 Rabies Clinic Schedule is available at essexcountyny.gov/health.

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