



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Public Health Unit

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH- Linda Beers, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH PROMOTION &
PLANNING- Jessica Darney Buehler, MPH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Raccoon tests positive for rabies

Elizabethtown, NY. A raccoon that was terminated in Westport on Wednesday afternoon has tested positive for rabies. The raccoon was spotted in a resident's driveway on Monday, acting abnormally. The raccoon returned again to the area on Wednesday, displaying similar behavior. The homeowners safely dispatched the animal due to concerns for pets and livestock in the immediate vicinity. There were no human, pet or livestock exposures; however, the Essex County Health Department (ECHD) agreed that testing the animal for surveillance purposes would be prudent. The Adirondack Veterinary Hospital accepted the raccoon for preparation and shipment to the Wadsworth Laboratory.

The testing lab notified ECHD of the positive result on Friday, May 2.

This is the first animal to test positive for rabies in Essex County so far in 2025. Last year, six animals tested positive for the virus, including two skunks and one raccoon in Westport, one woodchuck and one raccoon in Port Henry (Moriah), and one other raccoon in New Russia (Elizabethtown).

Linda Beers, Director of Public Health at ECHD reminds residents of the importance of getting pets vaccinated against rabies and keeping their pets shots up-to-date. "We know rabies is endemic to our area and that wildlife will occasionally become infected. Keeping your pets current on their rabies vaccines ensures their health and safety should they interact with wild animals, and it also limits the potential for virus transmission to people and other pets and livestock," Beers adds.

"Rabies bait drops are scheduled to occur earlier this year than in years past – in May instead of August - during the week of May 4 through May 10," notes Jessica Darney Buehler, Director of Health Planning and Promotion for ECHD. "The coverage area includes the northeastern portion of the county, which is where the majority of the recent rabies cases have been identified. We're hopeful that the rabies baiting effort, where oral rabies vaccine is distributed to locations via aircraft, helps control some of the cases we're seeing crop up in that area".

More information about rabies prevention can be viewed on the ECHD website at:
<https://essexcountyny.gov/Health/communicable-disease-control/rabies-center/>

To learn more about rabies bait drops – a program of the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services, go to:
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/national-wildlife-programs/rabies>



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To view the 2025 Rabies Clinic Schedule and register your pets, go to
<https://essexcountyny.gov/Health/>. The next opportunity to vaccinate your pets for free is Wednesday, May 14 from 6-7:30PM at the Moriah Fire Department.

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