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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rabid raccoon in Moriah – ECHD reports final rabies tally for 2023

Elizabethtown, NY. The start of the New Year brings renewed rabies prevention efforts for the Essex County Health Department (ECHD) and our local wildlife and animal conservation and control partners.

"We have enjoyed excellent working relationships with our local animal control officers, NYS DEC Officers, and USDA Wildlife Services Specialists that cover our area," noted Jessica Darney Buehler, Director of Health Planning & Promotion for ECHD. "Just last week we were working with these partners to improve and refine our processes and engage in open communication, information sharing and response activities. This real time data exchange helps us build the case for more rabies prevention support at the state and federal levels".

The last case of 2023 was discovered after a Moriah resident notified the town animal control officer (ACO) in late December of a raccoon that was found deceased on their property. The ACO retrieved the animal and because there was no human, pet or livestock exposure, contacted the local USDA Wildlife Services Specialist to do a specimen pickup and submission to the NYSDOH Wadsworth Laboratory. It was submitted for surveillance purposes only and therefore no rapid testing pursued. The specimen returned positive January 16, 2024.

The most recent raccoon case was the third raccoon to test positive for the virus in 2023. Seven gray fox, two woodchuck, and one bat also tested positive during the calendar year. Last year was an active year for rabies, with 13 confirmed cases in the county.

"2023 saw the highest number of positive rabies cases in Essex County since 2019," stated Linda Beers, Director of Public Health for ECHD. "While rabies is something we can expect to encounter in wildlife from time to time, ensuring the safety of our residents and visitors is always a top concern. We do this by advocating for additional wildlife vaccination efforts,



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Public Health Unit

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH- Linda Beers, MPH
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otherwise known as bait drops, increasing vaccinations for pets via our Rabies Clinics, conducting outreach and education about rabies, investigating bites and other exposure incidents, submitting specimens for testing, and recommending individuals and pets for rabies post exposure prophylaxis".

The 2024 Rabies Clinic schedule will be released later this winter.

To best protect people, pets, and livestock from possible exposures, ECHD recommends the following prevention actions:

- Keep pets and livestock up to date with rabies vaccinations;
- Attend pets when outside and feed pets inside;
- Tightly cap garbage cans, birdseed and other food sources to avoid attracting wild animals to your yard.

Those who have been exposed to saliva or brain tissue of a suspected rabid animal should:

- Wash all wounds thoroughly with soap and water;
- Seek medical attention immediately;
- Report animal bites or possible rabies exposures to ECHD 518-873-3500.

If your pet or livestock has contact with saliva or brain tissue of a suspected rabid animal, contact your veterinarian for medical care and contact ECHD to determine what additional follow-up may be needed.

Visit essexcountyny.gov/health for more information about rabies.

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