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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 over the weekend has tested positive for rabies. The raccoon approached a residence and attacked the family's cat, prompting the homeowner to dispatch the animal. The homeowner notified Essex County Health Department (ECHD) that same day, Saturday, August 3. The Adirondack Veterinary Hospital accepted the raccoon for shipment to the Wadsworth Laboratory.

The testing lab notified ECHD of the positive result on Wednesday, August 7.

This is the sixth animal to test positive for rabies in Essex County so far in 2024. Two skunks in Westport, one woodchuck and one raccoon in Port Henry (Moriah), and one other raccoon in New Russia (Elizabethtown) have tested positive for the virus.

Linda Beers, Director of Public Health at ECHD emphasizes the importance of getting pets vaccinated against rabies and keeping their shots up-to-date. "Thankfully, no human exposures occurred as a result of this incident and the cat involved was fully vaccinated against the disease, receiving appropriate treatment and a booster dose following the attack. Vaccination prevents a lot of additional worry and heartache when pets interact with wild animals, as sometimes happens. The owners have peace of mind knowing their pet is going to be okay even though the raccoon tested positive".

"After a busy spring, this is the first specimen with confirmed rabies since May," noted Andrea Whitmarsh, Program Coordinator at ECHD. "Rabies bait drops are scheduled to occur this week in the northeastern portion of the county and we're hopeful that this effort helps control some of the cases we're seeing crop up in that area. We also had a successful rabies vaccination clinic in Ticonderoga recently, where 83 pets were vaccinated. There are two more opportunities for the community to take advantage of our free clinics this year – one in Ray Brook on August 28 and another clinic in Schroon Lake on October 30. Both clinics are from 6 to 8PM".

To view the 2024 Rabies Clinic Schedule and register your pets, go to essexcountyny.gov/health.

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