



**HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**
Public Health Unit

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

May 12, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rabid Skunk in Essex, NY

Elizabethtown, NY. A week after a raccoon in Westport tested positive for rabies, the Essex County Health Department (ECHD) received confirmation that a skunk in the neighboring town of Essex has also died of the disease. Residents notified ECHD on the evening of Friday, May 12, that a deceased skunk had been found on their property. The animal was seen in recent days, looking sickly, and interaction with two family pets at the residence could not be ruled out completely. ECHD advised the homeowners about safe handling and storage of the skunk carcass over the weekend. On Monday, ECHD coordinated with the vet's office for specimen preparation and shipment to Wadsworth Laboratory.

The testing lab notified ECHD of the positive result this morning, Tuesday, May 12.

The pets were current with rabies vaccination at the time of the encounter and remain alive and well. Following guidance for an exposure to a confirmed case, the owners were advised to seek rabies vaccine boosters for the pets and are following post exposure protocols. No other people, pet, or livestock exposures were identified after additional inquiry.

“The town of Essex remains committed to working closely with the Essex County Health Department to mitigate the risks from potential encounters with rabid wildlife,” said Ken Hughes, Essex Town Supervisor.

“Rabies is a serious public health concern because the disease is nearly always fatal once symptoms appear,” explained Jessica Darney Buehler, Deputy Director at ECHD. “Fortunately, there are several ways we protect against infection, including, hosting free rabies vaccine clinics, educating the public about limiting interactions with wild animals and discouraging their presence around our homes and yards, working with our state and federal partners to best target rabies bait drops, and ensuring animal bites are investigated thoroughly and exposed individuals receive rabies post exposure treatment, when necessary,” added Buehler.

More information about rabies prevention can be viewed on the ECHD website at:

<https://health.essexcountyny.gov/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 2026 Rabies Clinic Schedule and register your pets, go to

<https://health.essexcountyny.gov/rabies-clinics/>

The next opportunity to vaccinate your pets for free is Tuesday, June 23, from 6-7:30PM at the Chesterfield Knights of Columbus.

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