



**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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Deceased raccoon tests positive for rabies in Essex County; health department asks public to report any known contact with the animal

Elizabethtown, NY. A raccoon found deceased at the Moriah Country Club in Port Henry has tested positive for rabies. The animal was initially discovered laying by a path on the course last Friday, May 17, and Animal Control Officer (ACO), Ed Roberts, was called to retrieve it. Officer Roberts reported the incident to the Essex County Health Department (ECHD) that same day, noting that the raccoon had been removed to a nearby trash receptacle.

The specimen was prepared and submitted to Wadsworth Laboratory on Monday, May 20, by Adirondack Veterinary Hospital. Staff from the veterinary office reported finding porcupine quills embedded in the raccoon's face. The testing lab notified ECHD of the positive result on Tuesday, May 21.

"In this instance, we do not have a complete picture regarding potential human exposures to the raccoon," said Jessica Darney Buehler, Director of Health Promotion and Planning at ECHD. "Because the animal was found at a location frequented by lots of members of the public and because the animal was moved from its initial location to a trash receptacle, we are asking that anyone who potentially came in contact with the animal to reach out to our department as soon as possible to discuss exposure risks".

Director of Public Health, Linda Beers, cited the department's communications with county officials and the country club - part of ongoing efforts at enhanced collaboration as this year's rabies season progresses. "The Essex County Health Department has notified both the Moriah Town Supervisor, Matthew Brassard, and Moriah Country Club President, Frank Gilbo," stated Beers. "And we always notify our partners at NYS DEC, USDA, and anyone known to have handled the animal, regardless of precautions taken, including the ACO and veterinary staff," explained Beers.

Supervisor Brassard reminded residents to avoid interactions with wild life, stating, "anyone concerned about a suspicious animal can reach out to the town offices and we will work with the ACO to investigate".

Club President, Frank Gilbo, echoed this advice. "If patrons notice an issue with wild life, we will work to address it; and we also have crews monitoring the grounds".



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This is the fifth animal to test positive for rabies in Essex County so far in 2024. Two skunks in Westport, one woodchuck in Port Henry (Moriah) and one other raccoon in New Russia (Elizabethtown) have tested positive for the virus. Four other recent submissions, including three from the Moriah area (a raccoon, a grey fox, and a woodchuck) and one from Westport (a bat), have tested negative for rabies.

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

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