



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
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Commissioner

2024 Veterinary Alert #5

Rabies Detected in Two Stray Cats and a Raccoon in Southwest Nassau County Near Border of Queens

- The Nassau County Health Department [recently reported three rabid animals](#): a stray cat collected in Cedarhurst and a stray cat and raccoon collected in Valley Stream, areas just east of JFK Airport in Queens.
- These animals represent the first identification of locally transmitted rabies in Nassau County since 2007.
- Veterinarians should ensure that their clients' pets are up-to-date for rabies vaccination and educate pet owners regarding rabies prevention.
- Consider rabies in the differential diagnosis for any animal presenting with progressive neurological illness particularly if the animal is stray, has history of a bite wound of unknown origin, known exposure to a rabid animal or rabies vector species, or a dog imported from a country where the [canine rabies](#) variant circulates.
- For current information on rabies and animals testing positive for rabies in NYC, visit nyc.gov/health/rabies.

Please share with your colleagues in veterinary medicine and your staff.

September 18, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

Since late July, the Nassau County Health Department has [reported](#) three rabid animals: a stray cat collected in Cedarhurst and a second stray cat and raccoon collected in Valley Stream, areas just east of JFK Airport in Queens. Historically, Nassau County had been considered free of raccoon rabies since 2007, with the exceptions of a rabid raccoon (2016) believed to have been translocated from Connecticut and rabid cat (2017) that originated from Westchester County.¹ Enhanced surveillance is underway to determine if the recently identified rabid animals are isolated events or represent previously undetected rabies transmission among raccoons in the areas. Nassau county has also implemented control measures including the [distribution of oral rabies vaccine \(ORV\) baits](#).

Rabid raccoons have been reported in Queens, though never south of the Belt Parkway. During 2022 and 2023 a record number of 20 rabid raccoons were detected in Queens. The raccoons were [clustered](#) in two areas, Allen Pond Park and a contiguous green space of connected parks and cemeteries in central Queens. Multiple rounds of targeted [raccoon ORV baiting](#) conducted in 2022 and 2023 was used to vaccinate raccoons and interrupt virus transmission. No rabid raccoons have been reported in Queens in 2024. See the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's [website](#) for a summary of rabies testing data.

In NYC and along the Atlantic Coast, rabid raccoons pose the greatest risk of rabies for pets and other domestic animals. Less commonly, rabid bats can transmit rabies. **Veterinarians, especially those practicing along the Nassau County border in the area of the new detections, are reminded to consider rabies as part of the differential diagnosis** for any animal presenting with a progressive neurological illness particularly if the animal is a stray, has a history of a bite wound of unknown origin or known exposure to a potentially rabid animal or

rabies vector species (raccoons, skunks and bats), or, in a dog imported from a country where the [canine rabies](#) variant circulates.

Rabies Vaccination for Dogs and Cats

As a reminder, maintaining vaccination against rabies is required for all dogs and cats in New York City. The New York City Health Code requires that all puppies and kittens receive their first rabies shot(s) by 4 months of age. Revaccination is required no later than one year after the primary vaccination and revaccinations administered at intervals thereafter, in accordance with the recommendations of the manufacturer of the U.S.D.A. approved rabies vaccine intended to maintain active immunization. Veterinarians should educate their clients that even indoor dogs and cats are at risk if they escape outside or if a rabid bat enters the home.

[Management guidelines for dogs and cats exposed to a rabies vector species or any rabid animal](#)

Upon consultation with the Veterinary Public Health Services' (VPHS) Animal Bite Unit (ABU), cases will be assessed on an individual basis:

- If never vaccinated against rabies:
 - Vaccines and quarantine in veterinary facility for up to 6 months at owner's expense or euthanize.
- If currently vaccinated against rabies:
 - Immediately give booster vaccine and confine and observe in owner's home for 45 days.
- If not currently vaccinated or has bite wound of unknown origin:
 - Managed on case-by-case basis.

[Management guidelines for healthy dogs and cats that have bitten a person](#)

Upon consultation with the Veterinary Public Health Services' (VPHS) Animal Bite Unit (ABU), pet owners will be directed to confine and observe dog or cat for 10 days.

- If animal is not currently vaccinated, do not vaccinate until end of the 10-day observation period.
- If animal remains healthy, rabies post-exposure prophylaxis is not indicated for bite victim.
- If animal becomes ill, must be evaluated by veterinarian and the Animal Bite Unit.

View additional information about rabies, including NYC summary data at nyc.gov/health/rabies. The following free resources are available for download or by calling 311.

- [Rabies: Protecting Your Pet](#) Brochure (PDF)
Other Languages: [Español](#) | [Русский](#) | [繁體中文](#)
- [Information for Veterinarians: Rabies Prevention Poster](#) (PDF)
- [Rabies Exposure and Biting Animals Management Flowcharts, Poster for Veterinarians](#) (PDF)

What All Veterinarians Can Do

EDUCATE clients to:

- Avoid contact with wild animals and stray animals.
- Make sure their dog or cat is up to date on its rabies vaccinations.
- Avoid leaving their pets outdoors unattended and feed them indoors.
- Avoid trying to separate animals that are fighting.
- Contact their veterinarian if their pet has been in contact with a raccoon, skunk, bat or any animal that might be rabid.

REPORT animal bites and suspect animal rabies cases to the NYC Health Department’s Veterinary Public Health Services (VPHS) Animal Bite Unit

During business hours	VPHS Animal Bite Unit (ABU)	646-364-1799
After business hours	NYC Poison Control Center	212-POISONS (212-764-7667)

QUESTIONS?

Call the NYC Health Department

Questions on rabies exposures in pets, animal bites, and other animal-related issues	Veterinary Public Health Services	646-364-1783
Questions on rabies exposures in people, PEP, and other human-related rabies issues	Bureau of Communicable Disease	347-396-2600
After business hours	NYC Poison Control Center	212-764-7667

As always, we greatly appreciate your partnership.

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Zoonotic and Vector-borne Disease Unit:

Bureau of Communicable Disease

ZIVDU@health.nyc.gov

347-396-2600

1. Brunt S, et. al. Origin of 3 Rabid Terrestrial Animals in Raccoon Rabies Virus-Free Zone, Long Island, New York, USA, 2016-2017. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2020 Jun;26(6):1315-1319. doi: [10.3201/eid2606.191700](https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2606.191700).

Visit our webpage for information and resources for veterinarians: [Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases: Information for Providers](#)

If you do not receive these alerts via email and would like to be added to the distribution list, email zivdu@health.nyc.gov

Report animal diseases to the NYC Health Department:

- Online through a [secure web-based reporting platform](#)
- Call 347-396-2600
- Fax the [Animal Disease Case Report form](#) to 347-396-2753

Report upon suspicion: Anthrax, brucellosis, glanders, influenza (novel with pandemic potential), mpox, plague, Q fever, SARS, tularemia

Report upon laboratory diagnosis: Arboviral encephalitides, carbapenem-resistant organisms, leptospirosis, psittacosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, salmonellosis, tuberculosis

Report within 24 hours any outbreak or suspected outbreak of any disease, condition, or syndrome, of known or unknown etiology, which may pose a danger to public health.