

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Rabies Confirmed In New Hartford Fox Attack

Post Exposure Treatment Underway

The gray fox that was involved in Monday afternoon's attack on a New Hartford resident as he worked in his yard has tested positive for rabies, Oneida County Health Department officials confirmed today.

"The positive test results comes as no surprise given the aggressive behavior displayed by the animal as he twice attacked his victim and then attacked a police officer who had responded to the incident," Bobbi Jo Kahl, Rabies Prevention and Treatment Coordinator for the Oneida County Health Department said. She added, *"Despite the fact that the man suffered no apparent bite wounds, the possibility of the animal's saliva transmitting the virus through skin abrasions he sustained is very real and warrants Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) treatment for rabies."*

Kahl urged County residents to take special care when outdoors this time of year and be aware of stray or wild animals in your vicinity. *"This is the time of year when animals come out of hibernation and are actively seeking food,"* Kahl said. She continued, *"You should always avoid contact with wild or stray animals, particularly those exhibiting unusual or aggressive behavior."*

The Health Department recommends steps you should take to reduce your chances of contact with animals that could possibly be infected with the rabies virus:

- Never leave pet food or water dishes outside your home as they may attract wild animals.
- Cover garbage cans or store them in a garage or shed.
- **Make sure your pets are up-to-date on their rabies vaccines**, as required by law.
- Never leave pets tethered and unattended outdoors.
- If you are bitten or scratched by a stray or wild animal wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and consult a medical professional. The incident should be reported to the Oneida County Health Department. If possible, contain the animal for rabies testing.

The Oneida County Health Department holds a series of rabies clinics at various sites throughout the year. The next scheduled clinic is **Wednesday, May 15th from 6-8 pm at the Clark Mills Firehouse**. All dogs, cats and ferrets 3-months and older must be leashed or in a pet carrier can get the rabies vaccine. A ten dollar donation to help defray costs is requested but not mandatory.

For more information on rabies or a complete schedule of rabies clinics, visit www.ocgov.net/oneida/health or call the Oneida County Health Department at **(315) 798-5064**.