

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

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Rabid Skunk Attacks and Injures Family Pet

A rabid skunk that attacked and injured a family pet has been reported in the Town of Western, Oneida County Health Department officials said today.

The dog, which is not up-to-date on its rabies vaccinations was attacked by the skunk while on the porch of the family's home. The homeowner was able to destroy the skunk which was then submitted for testing and confirmed to be rabid.

"Since the injured dog is not up-to-date on its rabies vaccinations, his owner must now decide whether to quarantine the dog for six months or have the pet euthanized," Bobbi Jo Kahl, Rabies Prevention and Treatment Program Coordinator said. She added, *"if the dog has contracted the deadly rabies virus as a result of the attack any contact with humans or other animals would put them at risk for rabies."*

Kahl urged all pet owners to make sure their dogs, cats and pet ferrets are kept current on their vaccinations. New York State Health Law requires that dogs and cats, three months and older to be initially vaccinated against rabies followed by a booster within twelve months. After that, dogs and cats require a shot every three years. Ferrets must be vaccinated yearly.

Kahl reminded pet owners not to leave their pets tied outdoors unattended or to leave pets' food or water dishes outside where they might attract wild or stray animals. She further warned people to avoid contact with stray or wild animals and to report all animal bites to the health department.

"If a person is scratched or bitten, the wound should be thoroughly washed with soap and water before consulting a medical professional. Every attempt should be made to capture or identify the animal so it can be determined whether it is possibly rabid and post exposure treatment is required," Kahl said.

For more information on rabies prevention or to report and animal bite, contact the Oneida County Health Department at (315) 798-5064 or visit our web site at www.oogov.net/oneida/health.