



NEWS RELEASE

NIAGARA COUNTY DEPARTMENT of HEALTH
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RABIES UPDATE

The Niagara County Department of Health would like to report that a rabid cat has been confirmed in the Town of Lockport. The cat appeared to be sick and a local resident came in contact with the animal while attempting to care for it. Because of this contact, the resident is currently undergoing post-exposure rabies treatment.

This is the first rabid cat confirmed in Niagara County in 2009 and the first domestic animal since 2003. A total of 11 rabid animals have been confirmed in the County this year: 7 raccoons, 1 fox, 1 bat, 1 skunk and 1 cat.

Rabies is a virus that affects the central nervous system and is fatal if allowed to incubate. However, timely treatment with post exposure prophylaxis is 100% effective in preventing rabies.

Environmental Health Director, James Devald cautions the community that rabies is still present in Niagara County. Although rabies occurs mostly in wildlife, and especially in raccoons, and bats, domestic animals are also vulnerable. Mr. Devald stresses, "That is why it is very important to have your pets vaccinated against rabies. Niagara County Department of Health can assist pet owners who cannot afford rabies vaccine". The County holds free rabies vaccination clinics in convenient locations each year. The Department will hold the next clinic at the Lewiston Highway Garage, 1445 Swann Road, Lewiston on August 11, 2009 from 5:00-6:30 p.m., and another clinic on September 12, 2009 at the Lockport Cornell Cooperative Extension, 4487 Lake Avenue, Town of Lockport, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. For information on free rabies clinics or the rabies shot schedule, residents can call 716-439-7444.

Mr. Devald advises residents of Niagara County are advised to never handle any strange and or sick acting animal whether it is wildlife or a domestic animal. Instead, anyone who observes such an animal should report it to his or her local municipality and/or police agency to determine the best way to handle the situation. Residents should also contact the Health Department for technical assistance and guidance.

This incident directs attention to a dangerous practice that exists in Niagara County as well as most everywhere in the State; local residents should not be feeding and caring for feral cats. Mr. Devald advises residents, "If you are caring for a feral cat, and truly care, you need to have the cat spayed or neutered and you need to get the cat vaccinated against rabies." Low cost spay and neuter is available through Save-A-Pet 559-3020 and Feline Friends 754-2050. Free rabies vaccinations are provided by the Niagara County Department of Health. A number of well qualified veterinary offices are also available throughout the County.