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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Love Your Own...Leave the Rest Alone!**

Spring is here and that means wild animals will be giving birth to their babies. Sometimes these cute baby animals will stray away from their mothers and wander into backyards, into barns, and onto porches tempting people to catch them and take them in as their own. "Please leave them alone because it can put you and other family members at risk of exposure to a fatal disease such as rabies," stated Paul Pettit, Director of the Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments (GO Health).

Rabies is a central nervous system disease, which attacks the brain and almost always results in death if a rabies exposure is not treated. Rabies is most often spread through bites, scratches, and contact with infected saliva. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rabies is most often seen in bats, raccoons, skunks and foxes, but any mammal can be infected with rabies. In addition, pets and livestock can get rabies if they are not vaccinated to protect against infection.

In 2021, GO Health tested 46 animals for rabies and four tested positive. Additionally, 221 dogs and 54 cats were observed in 10-day confinement between the two counties. A domestic animal is subject to 10-day confinement if they bite a human. The animal's health and behavior is monitored for 10 days to determine if rabies may be present and if further action is required.

**Genesee County- Animals Tested for Rabies in 2021**

	Cat	Dog	Bat	Woodchuck	Raccoon	Skunk	Goat	Cow	Fox
Total Tested	4	2	15	1	3	1	1	1	0
Total Positive	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	N/A
Total 10-Day Confinements	35	138	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

# of people treated for post-exposure	1	5	6	0	1	0	0	0	1
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**Orleans County- Animals Tested for Rabies in 2021**

	Cat	Dog	Bat	Raccoon	Coyote
Total Tested	5	4	7	2	0
Total Positive	1	0	0	1	0
Total 10-Day Confinements	19	83	0	0	0
# of people treated for post-exposure	3	2	5	2	1

What can you do to protect yourself against rabies?

- Leave all wildlife alone, including any injured animals. If you find an injured animal, do not touch it and contact your local animal control office for help.
- Avoid feeding, approaching, touching, or adopting wild animals and stray domestic animals such as cats and dogs.
- If you see a stray dog or cat, do not pet it. This is especially important if you are traveling out of the United States to a country where rabies in dogs is common.
- If you find any animal that is acting strangely, you should contact your local animal control office for help.
- Be sure that your pets (dogs, cats, and ferrets) are up-to-date on their rabies vaccination. Even indoor pets should be vaccinated and it is also recommended that livestock animals are vaccinated.
  - Public Health Law, Article 21, Title 4 requires New York State (NYS) residents to keep their pets (cats, dogs, and ferrets) up-to-date on their rabies vaccination.
- Keep family pets indoors at night and do not let them roam alone.

Anyone who has been bitten by any animal or may have been exposed to rabies needs to take immediate action. Make sure to thoroughly clean any wounds or bites with soap and water, and then call your health care provider for further instructions. If you can do so **safely**, capture the animal (being careful not to damage the head/brain) and call your local health department to report the incident. Capturing the animal is vital in order for it to be tested for rabies. Testing

will confirm if the animal is infected with the virus or not, making sure that only those who need treatment get it.

A doctor in consultation with the health department will determine who needs to be vaccinated with rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (RPEP). The cost to treat an individual varies considerably based on weight, number of doses, and insurance. In 2021, treatment costs ranged from \$2,000.00-\$9,000.00. GO Health will work with the patient's insurance company, but what is not covered by insurance is ultimately the responsibility of the taxpayers. In 2021, Genesee County treated 14 people and Orleans County treated 13 people.

"We encourage residents to do their part to prevent rabies in the community by vaccinating their pets and practicing caution around wild and stray animals," stated Pettit. "Please visit one of the upcoming FREE drive thru anti-rabies immunization clinics for dogs, cats and ferrets."

- Genesee County Clinics at the Genesee County Fairgrounds (5056 East Main Street, Batavia, NY)
  - Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
  - Thursday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
  - Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
  - Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Orleans County Clinics at the Orleans County Fairgrounds (12690 Rt. 31, Albion, NY)
  - Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
  - Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
  - Saturday, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
  - Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

For more information on Health Department services, visit [GOHealthNY.org](https://GOHealthNY.org) or call 589-3278 for Orleans County or 585-344-2580 ext. 5555 for Genesee County.