

ANDREW J. SPANO, Westchester County Executive
JOSHUA LIPSMAN, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health
SUSAN TOLCHIN, Director of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 4, 2006

**RABIES ALERT
Rabid Raccoon Located in Hastings**

The Westchester County Department of Health today issued a Rabies Alert to residents who may have had contact with a rabid raccoon found in the vicinity Zinsser Park in Hastings. The raccoon was killed on September 29th and has tested positive for rabies. The previous day, a person reported an aggressive raccoon on the aqueduct, near the park.

"Anyone who believes that he or she, or a pet, may have had contact with this raccoon should contact the Westchester County Department of Health immediately at (914) 813-5000 to assess his or her need for life saving rabies treatment," stated Joshua Lipsman, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., Westchester County Commissioner of Health.

Dr. Lipsman warns that anyone bitten by a rabid animal or having contact with its saliva may need to receive immediate rabies vaccination. "When administered early enough, before symptoms develop, the treatment is 100% effective," he said. "However, once symptoms occur, in humans or animals, the disease is fatal," he added.

"It is imperative for pet owners to immunize their animals against rabies and to ensure that these vaccinations are kept up to date," said Dr. Lipsman. "Previously vaccinated domestic animals such as dogs, cats, and ferrets, that have had contact with this raccoon require a booster vaccination within five days of exposure. Such incidents must be immediately reported to the health department," he continued. "If residents have questions, they should call us at (914) 813-5000."

Dr. Lipsman added, "A change in an animal's behavior is the first sign of rabies. A rabid animal may become either abnormally aggressive or unusually tame. It may lose fear of people and become excited and

MORE

irritable, or, conversely appear particularly passive. Staggering and frothing at the mouth are sometimes noted. Adults should encourage children to immediately tell an adult if they have been bitten by an animal and to refrain from touching unfamiliar animals.”

All animal bites or contacts with animals suspected of having rabies must be reported to the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000, 24 hours a day. For more information about rabies and its prevention, residents can also call the RABIES INFOLINE at (914) 813-5010 or visit the Health Department’s Website at www.westchestergov.com/health.