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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 8, 2007

**RABIES ALERT
Rabid Skunk Found in Yonkers**

The Westchester County Department of Health today issued a Rabies Alert to residents who may have had contact with a rabid skunk found in the vicinity of Perry Place in Yonkers.

The skunk was first reported to the Health Department and to the Yonkers Police Department on January 4th by a resident of Perry Place. The following day, January 5th, a neighbor discovered a dead skunk close to the original sighting. The animal was picked up by Westchester County Health Department staff and tested by the New York State Rabies Laboratory, which confirmed today that the skunk was positive for rabies.

"Anyone who believes that he or she, or a pet, may have had contact with this skunk should contact the Westchester County Department of Health immediately at (914) 813-5000 to assess his or her need for life saving rabies treatment," said Joshua Lipsman, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., Westchester County Commissioner of Health. "Anyone bitten by a rabid animal, or having contact with its saliva, may need to receive immediate rabies vaccination," he said.

When administered early enough and before symptoms develop, rabies treatment is 100 percent effective. Once symptoms occur, in humans or animals, the disease is fatal.

Unusual behavior may be the first sign of rabies in an animal. A rabid animal may become either abnormally aggressive or unusually tame. It may lose fear of people and become excited and irritable, or, conversely appear particularly passive and lethargic. Staggering and frothing at the mouth are sometimes noted.

MORE

Rabid Skunk – Page 2

Direct contact with wild or stray animals, even baby animals, is always inadvisable. Parents should instruct children to refrain from touching unfamiliar animals and to immediately tell an adult if they have been bitten or scratched by an animal. And any physical contact with a wild or unfamiliar animal should be reported to a health care provider. 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.

Keeping pet rabies vaccinations up to date is critical for protection against rabies. Westchester County law requires dogs, cats, and ferrets to be vaccinated against rabies and receive regular booster shots.

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.