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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 12, 2007

RABIES ALERT
Rabid Raccoon Found at Hilltop Hanover Farm in Yorktown

The Westchester County Department of Health today issued a Rabies Alert to residents who may have had contact with a rabid raccoon found at Hilltop Hanover Farm in Yorktown.

The raccoon, which was sick and injured, was found in a barn on the property of Hilltop Hanover Farm on March 7. The animal was picked up by Westchester County Health Department staff and tested by the New York State Rabies Laboratory, which has confirmed that the raccoon was positive for rabies.

"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 the need for life saving rabies treatment," said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Westchester County Commissioner of Health. "Anyone bitten by a rabid animal, or having contact with its saliva, may need to receive immediate rabies vaccination treatments," 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.

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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. 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.

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