



news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 14, 2008

FREE RABIES VACCINATIONS FOR DOGS AND CATS
One-day vaccination clinic sponsored by the Westchester County Health Department

Free rabies vaccinations will be available by appointment for dogs and cats owned by Westchester County residents on Saturday, August 23 from 1 to 5 pm at Cortlandt Animal Hospital, 1 Dogwood Road in Cortlandt Manor.

The vaccination clinic is sponsored by the Westchester County Department of Health and Cortlandt Animal Hospital. All county residents can bring their dogs and cats in for free rabies vaccinations but appointments are required. For an appointment, call Cortlandt Animal Hospital at (914) 737-3608. Cats must be brought in carriers and dogs must be on leashes. Aggressive dogs must also be muzzled.

“Rabies is a fatal disease to humans and animals,” said Westchester County Health Commissioner, Dr Joshua Lipsman. “Vaccination against rabies is essential to protect your pet, yourself and others, and is required by law.”

Under New York State law, dogs, cats and ferrets must receive their first rabies vaccine no later than four months after birth. A second rabies shot must be given within one year of the first vaccine, with additional booster shots given every one or three years after that, depending on the vaccine used. Owners who fail to get their pets vaccinated and keep the vaccinations up-to-date may be fined up to \$1,000.

Rabies is a fatal disease that is spread through the bite or saliva of infected animals. Those animals most commonly infected are raccoons, skunks, bats and foxes. However, domestic animals such as cats and dogs are also at risk because they can easily contract rabies from wild or stray animals.

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“It is important for a pet owner to know that if your pet is not up-to-date with its rabies vaccinations and it has contact with a rabid or suspect-rabid animal, or if it bites or scratches someone, the pet may be euthanized or quarantined for up to six months,” said Dr. Lipsman. “A pet that is up-to-date with its vaccinations would only need to get a booster dose of vaccine within five days of the pet’s exposure to a known or suspect rabid animal,” he said.

A change in an animal’s behavior is often the first sign of rabies. A rabid animal may become either abnormally aggressive or unusually tame. It may lose fear of people and become docile or it may become particularly excited and irritable. Staggering, spitting and frothing at the mouth are sometimes noted in infected animals. Adults should encourage children to avoid touching unfamiliar animals and to immediately tell an adult if they have been bitten or scratched by an animal.

All animal bites or contacts with animals suspected of having rabies must be reported to the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000. Outside of business hours, callers should follow instructions in the recorded message for reporting public health emergencies 24 hours a day.

To learn more about rabies and its prevention, residents can also call the Rabies Hotline at (914) 813-5010 to hear a taped message or visit the Health Department website at www.westchestergov.com/health.