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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RABIES ALERT

Possible Rabid Cat in Pelham Manor

The Westchester County Department of Health is issuing a Rabies Alert to residents who may have had contact with a potentially rabid stray cat in the vicinity of Roosevelt Place in Pelham Manor.

The cat, a black and white male, was injured three weeks ago. It has an abscess on its hind leg and may have other injuries. The cat has markings that resemble a black helmet and a mustache. His body is black with white spots and an all-black tail. The cat is also exhibiting neurological symptoms of rabies: his jaw is dropped, he's not eating, and he is dragging one of his legs.

Anyone who sees a cat that matches this description should call police and stay away from the cat.

"If you or a pet may have had contact with this cat, you should contact the Westchester County Department of Health immediately at (914) 813-5000 to assess the need for life saving rabies treatment," said Westchester County Commissioner of Health, Dr. Joshua Lipsman. "Anyone bitten by a rabid animal, or having contact with its saliva, may need to receive an 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. Rabid animals sometimes stagger and froth at the mouth.

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. New York State 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.