

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**DATE:** July 22, 2016

**END DATE:** July 30, 2016

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**RE:** Rabies Surveillance

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) wants to inform the public about the rabies surveillance efforts that will be occurring in the next of couple weeks in an area where at least three skunks were confirmed to have rabies in recent months. From July 21, 2016 through July 30, 2016, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will be collecting and testing road kill wildlife (including skunks, raccoons, coyotes, foxes, and bobcats) from the area around the Kersley Reservoir. Residents may notice USDA vehicles in their neighborhoods. In addition, citizens may bring deceased carrier animals to the Genesee County Animal Control for testing even after July 30, 2016. After this surveillance period is complete, GCHD will notify the community of the findings and any additional steps that may need to be taken.

As a reminder, wild animals become active this time of year, which means the possibility of exposure to rabies is increasing. Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system of mammals, including humans. A person may contract rabies through a bite, scratch, or saliva from an infected animal. A potential rabies exposure should never be taken lightly. Rabies is 100% preventable if medical attention is received shortly after contact. If untreated, rabies is fatal.

Vaccinating all pets under your care with the rabies vaccine is essential to promoting animal and human health. Whether animals are kept indoors or outdoors it is important to make sure they are all protected against rabies. Exposures may occur even in the most unlikely situations so protection against rabies is essential for all domestic animals for which a licensed vaccine exists. This includes dogs, cats, ferrets, horses, cattle, and sheep. GCHD will be contacting veterinary clinics in the area regarding this recent increase in rabies cases.

How to prevent the spread of rabies:

- If a bat is in your home, do not release the bat outside until after speaking with a permitted wildlife control contractor who handles nuisance wildlife. It may be possible to test the bat and avoid the need to receive rabies treatment.

- Keep vaccinations up-to-date for all dogs, cats, ferrets and other animals you own. A licensed veterinarian should give the vaccines, and the appropriate boosters can be discussed based on the guidelines.
- Seek immediate veterinary assistance for your pet if your pet is bitten by a wild animal or exposed to a bat.
- If you or a family member is bitten or scratched by a wild animal, immediately wash the wound with soap and hot water. Contact your physician and state or local health department for further guidance regarding potential rabies exposure to evaluate the need for rabies post-exposure vaccination.
- Never adopt wild animals, bring them into your home, or try to nurse sick, wild animals.
- Teach children to never handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.

For removal of nuisance animals, please contact a permitted contractor, with the Department of Natural Resources, preferably one with both liability insurance and workers compensation insurance. Ensure that the contractor is permitted for the specific animal you wish to be removed. A list of wildlife damage and nuisance animal control contractors in your particular area can be found here:

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/WLD Wildlife Damage and Nuisance Control Permittees 3664357.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/WLD_Wildlife_Damage_and_Nuisance_Control_Permittees_3664357.pdf). For domestic animals such as dogs or cats, please contact the Genesee County Animal Control at 810-732-1660.

GCHD wants you and your family to stay up-to-date on the most recent information regarding rabies. For more information about rabies please visit <http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,4579,7-186-25807---,00.html>. For questions regarding human health, contact GCHD at 810-257-1017.

Your Health. Our Work.

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