

**DATE:** March 31, 2016 **END DATE:** April 30, 2016  
**CONTACT:** Christine Rygiel, MPH, MB (ASCP)  
Epidemiologist  
**PHONE:** (810) 257-3815  
**RE:** Rabies

A rabid skunk has been identified in an urban area within Genesee County, the first case of rabies in an animal this year. Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) wants to remind residents that 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. Treatment is available and effective for rabies 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 animals for which a licensed vaccine exists. This includes dogs, cats, ferrets, horses, cattle, and sheep.

How to prevent the spread of rabies:

- If a bat is in your home, do not release the bat outside until after speaking with Genesee County Animal Control (GCAC) or GCHD. 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.

Page 1 of 2

- Seek immediate veterinary assistance for your pet if your pet is bitten by a wild animal or exposed to a bat.
- Call GCAC about removing stray animals in your neighborhood, to report a bat in your home, or to remove a dead animal on your property.
- 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.

GCHD wants you, your family, and your pets to have a playful and safe spring. For more information about rabies please visit <http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,4579,7-186-25807---,00.html>. Please call GCAC for animal care questions at 810-732-1660. For questions regarding human health, contact GCHD at 810-257-1017.

###