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VOICE

# PUTNAM Putnam Rabies Concerns Rise As Warmer Temperatures Arrive

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Wild animals, even cute babies, can carry rabies. Photo Credit: *Kathy DeBlock*

BREWSTER, N.Y. -- With warmer temperatures and more hours of daylight, people are spending more time outdoors, and the potential for contact with wildlife increases, according to the Putnam County Health Department.

Raccoons, skunks, foxes and bats, as well as feral cats, can carry the rabies virus, which is found in the saliva and nervous tissue of an infected animal.

Transmission can occur through an animal bite, or if saliva comes in contact with an open wound, or an individual's eyes, nose or mouth, the Health Department says. To educate children about the risk of rabies, teach them to: avoid wild animals, including new litters of baby animals in spring; tell an adult about any contact with a wild animal or unfamiliar pet; never touch a bat; if a bat is found indoors, call the Health Department immediately.

"While wildlife and feral cats may account for a significant number of required rabies treatments, the No. 1 reason for treatments in Putnam County remains bats," said Dr. Michael Nesheiwat, interim commissioner of health. As the weather warms, bats return to the

area and are more active and likely to get into homes.

"A bat found in the home should be captured since testing it for rabies is the only way to avoid unnecessary treatment, a two-week series of shots. Since 2014, over 200 bats have been brought to the Putnam County Department of Health for testing, a sign that the capture-the-bat message is getting out," added Nesheiwat. To safely capture a bat, watch the demo from the state Department of Health, available on the Putnam County website (<http://www.putnamcountyny.com/how-to-capture-a-bat/>). If you are interested in volunteering or making a donation to the Feral Cat Task Force contact the Health Department at 845-808-1390, ext. 43160.

All animal bites and contact with wild animals should be reported promptly to the Department of Health at 845-808-1390. After hours or on weekends/holidays, report the incident by calling the Environmental Health Hotline at 845-808-1390 and pressing 3. A Health Department representative will promptly return your call. For more information, visit [www.putnamcountyny.com/health](http://www.putnamcountyny.com/health) (<http://www.putnamcountyny.com/health>).

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