



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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www.putnamcountyny.gov/health

A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Calling All Cat Lovers: The Feral Cat Taskforce Needs Volunteers

Brewster, NY—The Feral Cat Taskforce is looking for new volunteers. The organization traps, neuters, vaccinates and releases feral cats in Putnam County. The ultimate goal is to decrease the number of feral cats over time to reduce the risk of rabies. These cats may carry this deadly virus that attacks the nervous system. The taskforce, which began in 2012, operates today through the joint efforts of volunteers from Putnam AdvoCATS, area veterinarians, and the Putnam County Department of Health. Since its beginning the group has successfully trapped, neutered and released over 840 cats. Of these, approximately 160 cats have been adopted.

“Feral cats present a serious risk of exposure to the rabies virus,” says Marianne Burdick, MPH, Supervising Public Health Sanitarian, who oversees the rabies program at the Putnam County Department of Health. “That’s because people are more likely to feed or care for a stray or feral cat, than to feed a wild animal such as a raccoon, skunk or fox, which are also known to carry the disease. Bats however still remain the number-one reason for potential exposure. Our volunteers from Putnam AdvoCATS and our area veterinarians have been instrumental in making the taskforce a success and we are grateful for their work.”

Feral cats do not have owners or may be strays that have been abandoned or lost. The *Trap-Neuter-Return* concept is a humane and effective approach used for decades in

the U.S. after being proven in Europe. Scientific studies show this practice improves the lives of feral cats, betters their relationships with the people who live near them, and decreases the size of colonies over time.

Volunteers for the Feral Cat Taskforce do not need any prior experience. They receive training to equip them to assist in compassionately trapping the animals. Veterinarians are also welcomed to join the program as well. The costs of the vaccine and neutering are covered by the Putnam County Department of Health and the PutnamAdvoCATS. For more information or to become a volunteer, contact PutnamAdvoCATS online at www.facebook.com/PutnamAdvoCATS or call the health department at 845-808-1390.

Residents with cats, as well dogs and ferrets, may take advantage the health department's free rabies vaccination clinics. The department partners with area veterinarians to hold three rabies vaccination clinics each year in March, July and November. The next one is scheduled for November 3 at Brook Farm Veterinary Center in Patterson from 2 to 4 p.m. For more information, call the health department or visit the PCDOH at www.facebook.com/PutnamHealth.

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our County website at www.putnamcountyny.com; or visit our social media sites at www.facebook.com/PutnamHealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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