

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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County offers free rabies clinic in Aberdeen *Residents can bring dogs and cats for vaccine on Feb. 20*

ABERDEEN, NJ – The Monmouth County Health Department (MCHD) and the Township of Aberdeen are offering a free rabies clinic for pets of Monmouth County residents on Saturday, Feb. 20 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Aberdeen Public Works facility in the Cliffwood Beach section of the town at 147 Lenox Road.

Earlier this month, the NJ Department of Health (NJ DOH) confirmed that a family dog from Aberdeen tested positive for rabies. The dog, a pit bull, did not have a current rabies vaccination.

“Rabies in dogs is uncommon in New Jersey,” said Merkel “Over the past five years, MCHD has confirmed 10 cats and only this dog with rabies in Monmouth County.”

According to the NJ DOH, the last rabid dog was identified in 2008; there have only been 8 dogs, including this case, confirmed with rabies since the raccoon variant virus entered the New Jersey in 1989.

“This is a reminder to all other residents to check your pet’s vaccination and health records and make sure they are current,” said Merkel. “Rabies vaccination of dogs and cats offers a very high level of protection against the virus.”

Dogs and cats who receive an initial rabies vaccination are not considered immunized until 28 days after the vaccine has been administered, therefore it is strongly recommended that any animal newly vaccinated or those too young to receive the vaccine (less than three months) not be left outdoors unattended.

“Protecting your pets by keeping them current on their rabies vaccine is an important buffer between wildlife rabies and human exposure,” said Freeholder John P. Curley, liaison to the MCHD. “Not only does the vaccine keep your pet safe, but it can help keep you and your family safe as well.”

In addition to vaccinating your pets for rabies, there are several things residents can do to protect themselves and their pets:

- Avoid wildlife and animals you do not know.
- Keep your pet on a leash. Do not allow your pet to roam; it can come in contact with rabid wildlife.
- Never feed or touch wild or stray animals, especially stray cats, bats, skunks, raccoons, foxes or groundhogs.

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- Teach your children that they should tell you if they were bitten or scratched by an animal.
- Call your doctor and the local health department if bitten or exposed to saliva or blood of a wild or stray animal.
- Contact your veterinarian if your pet was exposed to a bat, raccoon, skunk or other wild carnivore.

“If you are bitten by an animal, wash the wound immediately with soap and water and seek medical attention,” said Merkel.

According to the CDC, rabies is a preventable viral disease of mammals most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The vast majority of rabies cases reported to the CDC each year from New Jersey occur in wild animals like raccoons, skunks and bats.

CDC explains that the rabies virus infects the central nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death. The early symptoms of rabies in people are similar to that of many other illnesses, including fever, headache and general weakness or discomfort. As the disease progresses, more specific symptoms appear and may include insomnia, anxiety, confusion, slight or partial paralysis, excitation, hallucinations, agitation, hypersalivation (increase in saliva), difficulty swallowing and hydrophobia (fear of water). Death usually occurs within days of the onset of these symptoms.

Dates, times and locations of additional upcoming rabies clinics are available on the Health Department section of the County’s website at www.VisitMonmouth.com.

For more information, call the Monmouth County Health Department at 732-431-7456, ext. 8580.

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