



## MIDDLESEX COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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### PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY – May 14, 2010 Rabies Advisory

A raccoon tested positive for rabies in the Borough of Helmetta, Middlesex County. The raccoon was found on Railroad Avenue. This is the first positive rabies specimen in Helmetta this year, and the eighth in Middlesex County. **Immediately report any bites from a wild or domestic animal to your local health department and consult a physician as soon as possible.**

**Rabies** is caused by a virus which can infect all warm-blooded mammals, including man. The rabies virus is found in the saliva of a rabid animal and is transmitted by a bite, or possibly by contamination of an open cut. New Jersey is enzootic for raccoon and bat variants of rabies. Bats, raccoons, skunks, groundhogs, foxes, cats, and dogs represent about 95% of animals diagnosed with rabies in the United States.

#### Rabies Prevention Guidelines

The **Middlesex County Public Health Department** is advising residents to follow these guidelines in order to prevent rabies from being transmitted to themselves or their pets:

1. **Immediately report a bite from a wild or domestic animal to your local health department.** Wash animal bite wounds thoroughly with soap and water as soon as possible after the bite. Contamination of open cuts or scratches with saliva of potentially rabid animals should also be washed off immediately. Consult a physician as soon as possible.
2. **Immediately report any wild animal showing signs of unusual behavior.**
  - Signs of unusual animal behavior could be that the animal may:

<input type="checkbox"/> move slowly	<input type="checkbox"/> have increased drooling
<input type="checkbox"/> may act as if it is tame	<input type="checkbox"/> act aggressive
<input type="checkbox"/> appear sick	<input type="checkbox"/> have difficulty moving
<input type="checkbox"/> have problems swallowing	<input type="checkbox"/> have paralysis
<input type="checkbox"/> have an increase of saliva	<input type="checkbox"/> bite at everything if excited

Residents should avoid any contact with the animal and call your local animal control officer or local police department.

3. **Be sure that all family pets are up to date on their rabies vaccination.** If unsure please call your veterinarian. Call your local health department for free rabies vaccination clinic availability.
4. **Animal proof your home and yard.** Make sure all garbage containers have tight fitting lids, do not leave pet food or water outside, do not allow rainwater to collect in outdoor containers or equipment and keep yard free of garbage and debris.
5. **Do not feed or handle wild animals.**
6. **Avoid contact with stray animals or pets other than your own.**
7. **Try to prevent your pets from coming into contact with wild animals.**
8. **Screen off vents to attics and other areas that could provide shelter for bats.**

Additional information can be obtained by calling an Inspection Division Supervisor for Middlesex County Public Health Department, at 732-745-3100.