

# Skunk tests positive for rabies in New Bedford's South End

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) has notified the New Bedford Health Department of a skunk that has tested positive for rabies in the area of the "Poor Farm," located at the corner of Brock Avenue and Coral Street in the far South End of New Bedford.

The New Bedford Health Department and the New Bedford Animal Control urges neighboring residents who keep their pets outside to contact their veterinarians and make sure that their pets are up-to-date on their rabies vaccination. All pet owners should always ensure their pets' vaccinations are up to date.

Rabies can be found in several different animals in our community, so it is important to understand the signs of rabies in animals which can include:

- Abnormal or aggressive behavior
- Lethargy, weakness, or paralysis
- Self-mutilation
- Seizures
- Excessive salivation
- Difficulty breathing or swallowing

If you encounter an animal that may be infected with rabies, do not approach the animal. Keep a safe distance and call New Bedford Animal Control at 508-991-6366.

Rabies is transmitted through saliva, usually through a bite and is nearly always fatal for humans and animals, so it is important to get treatment right away. If you had contact

(bite, scratch, or physical contact) with an animal that may be rabid, thoroughly wash the area, seek medical attention and contact the State Department of Public Health, 24 hours a day/7 days a week, at 617-983-6800.

You can protect your pets by:

- Vaccinate Pets – The rabies vaccine for dogs, cats, and ferrets is a requirement under Massachusetts law. Contact your veterinarian or a rabies clinic to ensure vaccinations are up to date.
- Keep Pets Close – Always watch pets when they are outdoors and keep them away from wildlife. Use a leash, keep pets in fenced areas, and never let them roam free.
- Spay and Neuter – The CDC suggests spaying and neutering pets to reduce the potential for unwanted animals without vaccinations.
- Keep Wildlife Wild – Never keep a wild animal as a pet, it is illegal in Massachusetts.
- Secure Property – Bring all outdoor water or food bowls inside, cover garbage, and repair holes in chimneys, cellars, porches, and other areas. This will keep wildlife away from your property and out of your home.

The New Bedford Animal Control will also be holding its annual Rabies Clinic at Brooklawn and Hazelwood Parks on November 7. Vaccinations will be available for cats, dogs, and ferrets for \$15 per animal.