



# West Windsor Township

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## DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Division of Health

### Public Health Advisory - Rabies Positive Skunk

December 22, 2021

An injured skunk found wandering in a residential neighborhood on December 19, 2021 in West Windsor Township tested positive for the rabies virus. The sick skunk was found by a resident in the vicinity of Birchwood Drive, West Windsor, NJ. The skunk appeared injured and was unusually friendly. The homeowner promptly notified West Windsor Police Department and the Animal Control Officer responded to investigate. At this time, there are no known exposures to humans or domestic pets. **Residents are advised to contact the Health Department at 609-936-8400 immediately if they or their pets may have interacted with this animal.**

Rabies is a fatal disease caused by a virus that can affect warm-blooded animals, including skunks, dogs, cats, and humans. The disease is transmitted through direct contact with an infected animal's saliva and can be spread through a bite, contact with an existing open wound or possibly through contact with mucous membranes (eyes). Rabies in humans is rare in the United States but immediate attention is warranted in all cases of exposures from domestic and wild animals. Exposed individuals are directed to immediately wash the area with soap and water, seek medical treatment without delay and notify the Health Department promptly.

This incident highlights the importance of vaccinating all pets for rabies and avoiding contact with wildlife. The public is strongly encouraged to ensure pet vaccinations and licenses are up to date. Children should be cautioned about the importance of avoiding contact with stray animals and wildlife. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers a website for rabies education designed for children at [www.cdc.gov/rabiesandkids/](http://www.cdc.gov/rabiesandkids/)

Animals with rabies can be aggressive, vicious or may appear to be "drunk" and have difficulty walking. In some rare cases, an animal with rabies can appear normal. The best way to prevent exposure is to stay away from strays and wildlife. Residents are encouraged to take preventative measures such as bat-proofing homes, securing trash cans from wildlife, vaccinating pets and educating young children to stay away from animals they do not know. Notify the Police Department at 609-799-1222 if you notice wildlife acting strangely, or if nocturnal animals, such as raccoons, skunks or opossums, are seen wandering during daylight hours. For additional information, please contact the West Windsor Township Health Department at 609-936-8400.