

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FREE RABIES VACCINES FOR WESTCHESTER PETS APRIL 24

(New Rochelle, NY) – Westchester County residents can bring their dogs, cats and ferrets in for free rabies vaccinations on **Sunday, April 24** from **10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Stamen Animal Hospital, 61 Quaker Ridge Road in New Rochelle.** Appointments are required. Call 914-632-1269 for more information.

An adult must supervise all pets. Cats and ferrets must be in carriers and dogs must be on a leash. Aggressive dogs must be muzzled. No examinations will be given.

“Vaccinating your pet against rabies will protect your pet and your family in case your pet has contact with a rabid or potentially rabid animal,” said Westchester County Health Commissioner, Sherlita Amler, MD.

Under New York State law, dogs and cats must receive their first rabies vaccine no later than four months after birth. A second rabies shot must be given within one year of the first vaccine, with additional booster shots given every one or three years after that, depending on the vaccine used. Owners who fail to get their pets vaccinated and keep the vaccinations up-to-date may be fined up to \$2,000.

Rabies is a fatal disease that spreads through the bite or saliva of infected animals. Those animals most commonly infected are raccoons, skunks, bats and foxes. However, domestic animals such as cats and dogs are also at risk because they can easily contract rabies from wild or stray animals.

A pet that is up-to-date with its rabies vaccinations would only need a booster dose of vaccine within five days of the pet’s exposure to a known or suspect rabid animal. Animals not up-to-date with rabies vaccinations would be quarantined or euthanized following contact with a rabid or suspect-rabid animal.

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A change in an animal's behavior is often the first sign of rabies. A rabid animal may become either abnormally aggressive or unusually tame. It may lose fear of people and become docile, or become excited and irritable. Infected animals sometimes stagger, spit and froth at the mouth. Children should be discouraged from touching unfamiliar animals, and to tell an adult right away if they have been bitten or scratched by an animal.

All animal bites or contacts with animals suspected of having rabies must be reported to the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000. After hours, callers should follow instructions in the recorded message for reporting public health emergencies 24 hours a day.

To learn more about rabies and its prevention, visit the Health Department's website at www.westchestergov.com/health, like us on Facebook at facebook.com/wchealthdept or follow us on Twitter @wchealthdept.

About Westchester County

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just under a million. Originally home to Native Americans, who were members of the Lenape tribe, it is today a rich mix of many cultures and landscapes. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester is made up of 6 cities, 19 towns and 20 villages. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth County Executive. Using inclusion and openness as a foreground, Latimer is fighting to make Westchester a destination for all people to live, work and enjoy. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting www.westchestergov.com

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