



## PUBLIC HEALTH PRESS RELEASE

### **PET OWNERS ADVISED OF WIDESPREAD RABIES RISK IN HERKIMER COUNTY and DATES OF RABIES CLINICS FOR 2009**

The increasing incidence of animal rabies and risk to humans in Herkimer County has heightened the importance of animal vaccination for rabies. An exposure to rabies can be fatal for a human or a pet, and vaccination of pets and other animals represents the best preventive measure available.

*Starting on March 19th, 2009 Herkimer County Public Health will be providing ELEVEN FREE RABIES CLINICS (donations are greatly appreciated!). The first clinic is Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009 from 6 to 7:30 PM at East Herkimer Fire House. The second clinic is Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009, from 6 to 7:30 PM at Norway Community Center. Please see schedules for the other 9 clinics at [www.herkimercounty.org](http://www.herkimercounty.org)*

During 2008, Herkimer County Public Health diagnosed rabies in skunks, fox, raccoons, cats, and a bull. These fatal cases were diagnosed throughout Herkimer County in 2008, and many humans needed treatment for possible infection. Human rabies infection is usually fatal, so extreme caution and care is necessary for possible bite victims. If you are bitten, scratched or have contact with any animal that might be rabid, immediately wash the wound with water and soap, and seek emergency medical attention at any hour of the day or night. Be certain that the medical provider reports the incident to Herkimer County Public Health at 867-1176.

Strict laws of New York State hold owners responsible for keeping dogs, cats and ferrets up-to-date in their rabies vaccination, and assign them responsibility for confinement of any unvaccinated pet at the owner's expense. Animals kept or fed by a homeowner are the responsibility of the homeowner. Residents must check and be sure that all their animals are up-to-date with their rabies vaccinations.

Dogs, cats and ferrets 3 months or older must be vaccinated, even if they stay indoors. Every dog and cat needs two rabies vaccinations one year apart, and then every three years needs revaccination. A certificate of vaccination allows licensure of a pet.

All Herkimer County residents should be very careful around any wild animals, but also stray animals, including stray domestic animals such as dogs and cats. Bats remain an important rabies carrier and should be avoided. Parents must protect their children from any contact with wild animals or bats. Do not handle pets with bare hands (USE THICK GLOVES) if the pets have had contact with a possible rabid animal, and seek veterinary examination for the pet.

Herkimer County Public Health is available for assistance, advice, and testing of animals. Please call 315-867-1176 **AT ALL HOURS**. Regular hours are 8AM to 4PM on weekdays.

The dates of subsequent Rabies clinics are East Herkimer March 19<sup>th</sup>, Norway March 26<sup>th</sup>, Ohio April 23<sup>rd</sup>, Dolgeville May 14<sup>th</sup>, Frankfort June 11<sup>th</sup>, East Herkimer August 6<sup>th</sup>, Frankfort September 10<sup>th</sup>, Old Forge September 24<sup>th</sup>, Cedarville October 1<sup>st</sup>, Dolgeville October 22<sup>nd</sup>, and East Herkimer November 7<sup>th</sup>. Please call 315-867-1176 to confirm date and location of clinics, or check at [www.herkimercounty.org](http://www.herkimercounty.org)