

**GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **FREE RABIES VACCINES FOR WESTCHESTER PETS SATURDAY AUGUST 27**

(White Plains, NY) – Westchester County residents can schedule free rabies vaccinations for their dogs, cats and ferrets on **Saturday, August 27 from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the SPCA of Westchester, 590 North State Road, in Briarcliff Manor.** Call 914-941-2896 x 110 for a required appointment. There will be no examinations.

Cats and ferrets must be in carriers and dogs must be on a leash. Muzzle all aggressive dogs. An adult must supervise each pet.

Westchester County Commissioner of Health, Sherlita Amler, MD, said: “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.”

Under New York State law, dogs and cats must receive their first rabies vaccine no later than four months after birth. They must get a second rabies shot within one year of the first vaccine. Every one or three years thereafter, depending on the vaccine used, dogs and cats must get an additional booster shot. Owners can be fined up to \$2,000 for pets that are not up to date on their vaccinations.

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 to get 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 need to be quarantined or potentially euthanized following contact with a rabid or suspect-rabid animal.

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. Staggering, spitting and frothing at the mouth are sometimes noted in infected animals. Adults should encourage children to avoid touching unfamiliar animals, and to immediately tell an adult 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 how to prevent rabies, visit the Health Department's website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health), like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/wchealthdept](https://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 over 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](http://www.westchestergov.com)