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PRESS RELEASE

REPORTING OF ANIMAL BITES IS REQUIRED BY LAW

Paramus Health Officer John Hopper wishes to remind all Borough residents that State law requires that all animal bites and scratches be reported within twelve hours to the local health department in the municipality where the person bitten resides. The law also includes reporting of a bite by one's own pet.

Hopper stated that raccoon rabies entered New Jersey in 1989 and has since spread throughout the entire State and continues to be a threat to residents and their domestic animals. Although approximately 75 percent of animals confirmed to be rabid are raccoons, many other animals (especially skunks, groundhogs, foxes and stray cats) also have become infected after exposure to raccoons. For these reasons, it is very important that residents ensure that their pets' rabies vaccinations are always up to date. Parents should also caution their children to stay away from wild and stray animals.

For dog and cat bites where the animal is available for observation, the pet's owner will be instructed to confine the animal for a period of ten days for observation for symptoms of rabies. Wild animals involved in biting incidents, if available, will be euthanized and tested for rabies. In biting incidents where the animal is not available for observation or testing, the local health department will provide guidance on the necessity of post-exposure rabies treatment.

Bat exposures are also of concern, as some bats have been found to carry rabies. In instances where a person finds a bat indoors, regardless of whether the bat was known to have had contact with a human being, the local health department should be contacted as post-exposure rabies treatment might be considered for persons who were in the same room as the bat and who might be unaware that a bite or direct contact had occurred (i.e. a sleeping person).

Once symptoms of rabies develop, there is no known effective treatment for the disease. Fortunately, post-exposure rabies treatment is effective in preventing rabies, if given in a timely manner following exposure to a rabid animal.

Paramus residents wishing to report an animal bite should contact the Police Department at 201-262-3400, or the Paramus Health Department at 201-265-2100, Ext. 755.

Cc: Mayor Tedesco
Councilwoman M. O'Brien
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