

July 16, 2015

For Immediate Release

Released by: The Belmont Health Department

On July 13, 2015 a fox, captured by Belmont Animal Control Officer John Maguranis, tested positive for rabies. This is the second animal that has tested positive for rabies in Belmont this year, the first being a skunk on June 21st. Rabies is a very serious viral disease found in animals that can be spread from an infected animal to a person. Rabies is spread through the saliva of an infected animal and can be transmitted from a bite, or when the animal's saliva comes in contact with a person's mouth, eyes, or an open sore.

The Health Department and Belmont Police Department are urging residents to protect their families and pets by taking the following steps:

- Make sure your dogs and cats (including inside only cats), are up to date on their rabies vaccinations.
- Keep your children, loved ones, and pets from approaching, touching, or feeding wild or stray animals.
- All garbage should be contained in garbage cans that are closed and secured to avoid attracting wildlife.
- Do not feed or water your pets outdoors. Even empty bowls will attract wild and stray animals.
- Do not let your cats and dogs roam freely.
- Keep your chimney capped and repair holes in attics, cellars, garages and porches to help keep wild animals like bats and raccoons out of your home.
- Report any animal that behaves oddly, looks sick, injured or orphaned to the Animal Control Officer or the Health Department at the numbers below. If the Animal Control Officer or Health Department cannot be reached please notify the Belmont Police at 617-484-1212.

If a bite or other significant exposure to rabies does occur, swift action can prevent progression to rabies disease. If a person has been bitten or scratched by an unfamiliar animal or an animal suspected of having rabies, immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and then **seek medical attention**. If you find a bite or wound on your dog or cat that cannot be explained, take your animal to a veterinarian.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2,819 wild and domestic animals were submitted to the William A. Hinton State Laboratory Institute for rabies testing in 2014. One hundred forty-eight (148) or five percent (5%) tested positive. Of the 148 that tested positive, four were domesticated cats. For more information about rabies in Massachusetts visit:

<http://www.mass.gov/dph/rabies>

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/animal-health/rabies-control-program/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies>

**Belmont Animal Control 617-993-2724 / Belmont Health Department 617-993-2720 /
Belmont Police Department 617-484-1212**