



# NEWS

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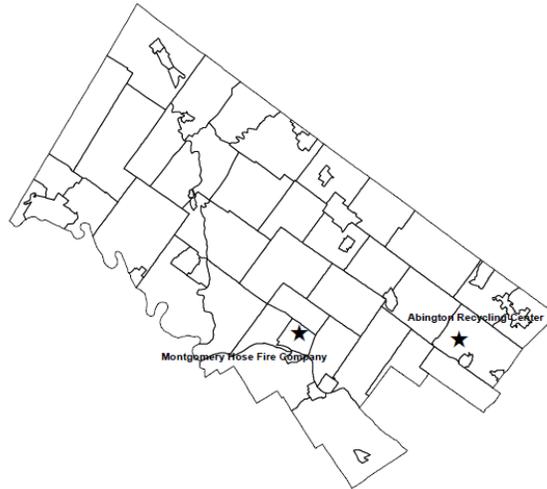
### Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Office of Public Health Announces Rabies Clinic Dates

**Norristown, PA (May 10, 2018)** – The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Office of Public Health (OPH) will be conducting its annual Low-Cost Rabies Immunization Clinics for the 27<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. The clinics this year will be held on the third Saturday during the months of May and September 2018 to ensure rabies vaccine is offered to pets during the animal bite season. As in previous years, licensed rabies vaccine is administered to cats, dogs, and ferrets at a reduced cost.

#### RABIES CLINIC LOCATIONS

The 2018 Low-Cost Rabies Immunization Clinic locations, dates and times are:

LOCATION	DATE	TIME
Abington Recycling Center 2201 Florey Lane , off of Easton Road Abington	May 19	9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Montgomery Hose Fire Company 201 West Freedley St. Norristown	Sept. 15	9 a.m. – 12 p.m.



All pets must be leashed or in an approved carrier at the clinic. The vaccination cost is \$10 per shot. Montgomery County Treasurer's Office will be on-site during the clinics to assist residents with obtaining dog licenses.

In 2017, the OPH's Low Cost Rabies Clinic provided vaccine to 303 pets at two sites in Montgomery County (Abington, 175 and Norristown, 128).

**For more information about the OPH's Rabies Control Program, please contact the Division of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at (610) 278-5117.**

### **About Rabies**

With the warm weather approaching, more residents will be outside with their pets walking or hiking on trails and in parks. These activities could place county residents at a higher risk of exposure to wild animals and/or stray animals.

### **What is rabies?**

Rabies is a viral disease that affects the central nervous system. It can affect all mammals, including humans. It is usually transmitted to humans via the saliva of an infected animal. Rabies is a fatal disease once symptoms appear.

### **How is rabies spread?**

Rabies is spread most often through the bite of a rabid animal. It can also be spread through a scratch from a rabid animal that breaks in the skin or through exposure of an open wound or mucous membrane (eye, nose, or mouth) to saliva from a rabid animal. In Montgomery County, rabies has been found in raccoons, bats, skunks, foxes, groundhogs, beavers, steer, cats and dogs.

**Is rabies a problem in Pennsylvania?**

Rabies continues to be a significant public health problem in the Commonwealth. In the past 10 years, between 350 and 500 animals are annually confirmed in the laboratory to have rabies. In 2016, 405 animals tested positive for rabies: raccoons (43.7 percent), bats (16.5 percent), cats (12.4 percent), skunks (12.4 percent), and foxes (7.9 percent). In contrast to the situation in animals, human rabies in Pennsylvania is rare. The last diagnosed human case in the Commonwealth was in 1984.

**All cats and dogs three months of age and older must be vaccinated against rabies. Pennsylvania State Law and the Montgomery County Public Health Code require this.**

Vaccinating domestic animals is an important way to prevent rabies transmission from wildlife animal reservoirs to the human population.

**Many Montgomery County residents are not vaccinating their cats or dogs.**

When reviewing the animal bites reported to Montgomery County in 2016, 1,378 were animal-to-human, 194 were animal-to-animal, and an additional 246 were domestic animals with a wound of unknown origin that was presumed to be caused by a suspected rabid animal. Of the domestic animals involved in human biting incidents, OPH could only verify that 45.2% of dogs or cats were up-to-date on rabies vaccine at the time of investigation.

**What should I do if an animal bites me?**

The first step in rabies prevention is to immediately wash the wound with plenty of soap and warm water, and then promptly seek medical care. If the circumstances of the exposure warrant, human rabies vaccine may be prescribed. The vaccine is a series of four shots given in the arm (or thigh for small children) on days 0, 3, 7, and 14 after presentation to the health care provider. Rabies immune globulin is also given along with the vaccine on day zero. Rabies vaccine is highly effective in preventing the disease after an exposure, if given before any symptoms develop.

**Animal rabies remains a problem. The number of animal rabies cases reported to the OPH in the last ten years are as follows:**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>ANIMAL RABIES CASES INVOLVING HUMAN OR DOMESTIC ANIMAL</b>	
2007	11	(4 bats; 3 skunks; 2 raccoons; 1 groundhog; 1 steer)
2008	21	(8 skunks; 6 raccoons; 5 bats; 2 cats)
2009	14	(10 raccoons; 2 skunks; 1 fox; 1 bat)
2010	10	(5 raccoons; 3 skunks; 1 bat; 1 cat)
2011	2	(2 raccoons)
2012	15	(9 bats; 3 raccoons; 2 skunks; 1 cat)
2013	7	(3 raccoons; 1 cat; 2 bats; 1 skunk)
2014	18	(8 raccoons; 4 bats; 3 cats; 2 skunks; 1 fox)

2015	8	(7 raccoons;1 bat)
2016	4	(2 raccoons; 1 cat; 1 bat)
2017	14	(11 raccoons; 2 bats; 1 cat)

Currently in 2018, Montgomery County animal rabies cases reported to date are as follows: Five positive animal rabies cases in Montgomery County this year includes three raccoons and two skunks: Lower Merion Township (1) , Horsham Township (1), Lower Frederick Township (1), Upper Gwynedd Township (1).

**The recommended precautions to prevent animal bites and possible rabies risk are:**

- Do not feed, befriend, handle, or try to make pets of wild animals or stray domestic animals. Wild animals should not be handled or kept as pets.
- Vaccinate domestic dogs, cats, ferrets, and selected livestock according to your veterinarian’s recommendations.
- Obey animal control ordinances, particularly not allowing domestic animals to run at large. All animals should be restrained and leashed when in public.
- If bitten by a wild or domestic animal, immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention from your doctor or hospital emergency room.
- Healthcare providers are required to report animal bites within 24 hours. Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis will be recommended to residents as necessary.