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Raccoon strain rabies confirmed in Halton

The Halton Region Health Department received test results from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency on Monday confirming a case of raccoon strain rabies in a skunk found in the City of Burlington.

This is the tenth confirmed case in Burlington since Oct. 4, 2016. The Health Department is reminding residents to avoid all contact with raccoons, skunks and other wild animals.

Rabies is a viral disease that causes severe damage to the brain and spinal cord, and if untreated before symptoms appear will lead to death. The virus is spread through the saliva of an infected animal, usually entering through a bite or scratch.

"Anyone who comes in physical contact with a raccoon or other wild animal should see a physician immediately and contact the Health Department by dialing 311," said Dr. Daniela Kempkens, acting medical officer of health for Halton Region. "Halton Region, as well as neighbouring communities, are experiencing a higher than average number of rabies cases and we want residents to

be aware of rabies and know how to protect themselves from wild and stray animals."

After someone is exposed to rabies, timely use of the rabies vaccine can prevent the rabies illness. While the rabies vaccine is extremely effective if it is administered before any symptoms occur, there are a number of things you can do to protect your family and pets from the threat of rabies:

- Seek medical attention immediately if you come in contact with a raccoon, skunk or other potentially rabid animals.
- Report all animal bites or scratches to the Halton Region Health Department.
- Warn your children to stay away from any wild, stray or aggressive animals.
- Do not touch dead or sick animals.
- Do not feed or keep wild animals as pets.
- Make sure your pet's rabies vaccinations are up to date.
- Keep your pet on a leash when off your property.
- Any pet that has come in contact with a raccoon or other wild animal should be seen by a veterinarian.

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