

**June 21** – the Rabies test results for the two other littermates of the adopted kitten that tested positive for rabies on June 15, 2016 came back from the Health Department **NEGATIVE**. They were not infected. There were no risks to their adopters or the public from these two kittens.

AWA keeps kittens or littermates separated and does not mix kittens. Therefore this litter/kitten never exposed other kittens at AWA.

**June 15** – Today, AWA was made aware that an adopted 11 week old kitten tested positive for rabies. The kitten arrived at AWA on May 28th and was housed in one cage at AWA from May 28th to June 5th. He was adopted on June 5th and presented with neurological symptoms on June 9th. The kitten did not show symptoms of the disease while at AWA.

The virus must be in the salivary glands to transmit the disease and this generally occurs in a 10 day period before onset of neurological symptoms. The kitten came to AWA from an individual who was caring for a litter of three. Two other littermates were also adopted out, showed no symptoms of the disease but were returned to AWA on June 15th. They were euthanized and will be tested to confirm there is no risk of additional exposure to any other people or pets from the littermates.

Rabies is transmitted mainly from bites and rarely from scratches. You must be bitten or scratched by an infected animal to contract the disease.

AWA keeps cats and kitten litters separated, therefore reducing the chances of cats and kittens fighting and potential exposure outside of a single litter. There is little concern within the AWA organization that other cats, kittens, dogs or puppies were exposed.

If anyone is bitten or scratched at AWA, it is the organization's policy that the bite/scratch be reported immediately to AWA management so an animal can be quarantined and monitored for signs of disease. AWA has no reported bites or scratches during the period that the kittens were in the shelter's care. We will keep the public and our supporters informed of any additional relevant information as it becomes available.

We're working closely with the Camden County Health Department on the incident. Here's the release they published. <http://awanj.org/file/Camden-County-Health-Dept.-Statement.pdf>

#### **FAQ:**

1. Are kittens Rabies-vaccinated before adoption?
  - a. The Rabies vaccination is given at 3 to 4 months of age per the NJ health department regulations. Animals 8 weeks and older can be adopted. This means that young puppies and kittens under the age of 12 to 16 weeks adopted, purchased or found, are not vaccinated for Rabies or fully immunized until one month after receiving the vaccination.
2. How does one get exposure to rabies?
  - a. Rabies is a virus that is transmitted from one animal to another animal through a bite and very rarely a scratch. Many wild animals are infected with rabies. Normally cats and dogs get exposed to Rabies when they get into a fight with a wild animal.

3. What do I do if I handled this kitten or others at AWA?
  - a. Do not panic. Ask this: were you bitten? Did you get a scratch? Did you have open wounds on your hands when handling the kitten? If you were bitten by a kitten while at AWA during May 28th to June 5th, we want to know. Please contact us. Otherwise, please know that AWA keeps kittens separated and monitors for disease.
  
4. He was part of a litter, do the other kittens have Rabies?
  - a. There are no cases of rabies at AWA. We do not expect any other cases.
  
5. What should concerned adopters do?
  - a. If you have concerns that a recently adopted kitten was exposed and have additional questions, you may always contact the shelter, 856-424-2288 or email [adoptions@awanj.org](mailto:adoptions@awanj.org).
  
6. I visited the AWA Pet Clinic with my animals during this time period, is there a risk they were exposed? No, because your pet did not come in contact with the shelter kitten that came up positive for Rabies or his littermates.

**We have been made aware that there are a few inaccurate/negative social media posts circulating. This is unfortunate.**

Animal rescue groups, animal shelters and good Samaritans take in and provide for hundreds of kittens each year. Many kittens come in after being found at worksites or under bushes or in sheds. Saving them is important to all that care for cats. Some cats can harbor a variety of disease and you will not know because illness have different incubation periods.

Rabies can manifest after several days or can take months. This depends on a few things: bite location, amount of virus transmitted at the time of bit, specific strain of the virus, how quickly the virus travels to the nervous system.

Last year a stray cat tested positive for rabies at a municipal shelter, the year before that a kitten tested positive at a local county shelter. These are rare incidents; however, each one reminds all of us that rabies is around, pets should be immunized and there are risks when handling outside animals.

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