

RECENT RABID ANIMAL EXPOSURE PROMPTS WARNINGS: Don't Touch Wild Animals!

In the past three (3) weeks two rabid raccoons have been found in Camp Hill. Due to recent incidents of rabies infected animals coming into contact with humans, all citizens are advised to learn to recognize rabid animal behavior, to protect themselves and to have their pets inoculated against the disease. The most publicized incidents in recent years involved rabid raccoons and rabid skunks. The disease is also prevalent in bat and fox populations. Humans are susceptible to the disease through animal bites or other contact with rabid animal's saliva through a break in the skin.

WHAT IS RABIES

Rabies is an acute viral disease that attacks the central nervous system of its victim. Sometimes called hydrophobia, or 'fear of water'. Rabies has affected animals and humans since ancient times.

Rabies is most often passed from animal to animal, or animal to humans through bites. The rabies virus in the attacker's saliva is passed through the puncture wound into the victim's skin. The virus also can be transmitted by licking when saliva is deposited on broken skin.

RABIES IN ANIMALS

Animals with rabies act differently than healthy animals. Wild animals may move slowly or act tame. A pet that is usually friendly may snap at you and try to bite.

There are two common types of rabies. One type is "furious" rabies. Animals with this type are hostile, may bite at objects, and have an increase in saliva. Rabid animals look like they have foam in their mouths because they have more saliva.

The second and more common form is known as paralytic or "dumb" rabies. An animal with "dumb" rabies is timid and shy. It often rejects food and has paralysis of the lower jaw and muscles.

SIGNS OF RABIES IN ANIMALS INCLUDE:

- Changes in an animal's behavior including nocturnal animals seen during the day
- General sickness
- Problems swallowing
- Increase in drool or saliva
- Wild animals that appear abnormally tame or sick
- Animals that bite at everything if excited
- Difficulty moving or paralysis
- Death

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM RABIES

The best way to protect yourself from getting infected with rabies is to NEVER approach any stray or wild animals. Don't feed them or touch them, even if they look cute and friendly. A rabid animal may sometimes look tired or sick or even very angry.

Another important step is to have your animals VACCINATED by your veterinarian. The vet will give them shots so that they can't catch rabies or give it to you or anyone else or other animals. Because of these immunizations, almost no domesticated pets have rabies.

MOST COMMONLY INFECTED ANIMALS

In general, wildlife most commonly infected with rabies are raccoons, foxes, skunks and bats. Among domestic animals, cats are most likely to contract the disease due to their nocturnal roaming and the fact that more cats than dogs have not received rabies immunizations. Dogs and ferrets, however, are also susceptible to rabies.

PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE

Admire nature from a distance. As the County has grown, wildlife habitat has become residential areas. Even healthy wildlife can become aggressive and attack either pets or humans during breeding, nesting and denning seasons.

Parents should warn their children of the dangers of approaching wildlife of any kind, and should take precautions to protect small children from any contact with wild animals. Since small children are accustomed to hugging their own pets and animal toys, they may attempt to hug sick animals. Make sure they are encouraged to report any potentially infectious contact they may have with animals.

Be wary of any domestic or wild animals displaying unusual or suspect behavior and report this to the police.

If bitten by a wild or stray animal or pet that is acting strangely, wash the wound immediately and thoroughly with soap and water – preferably soaking the affected area for 10 minutes – apply antiseptic - seek medical attention immediately - and report to the police by calling 911.

If someone is bitten by a wild animal, or any animal for which the owner is unknown, make a reasonable attempt to confine the animal by throwing an empty trash can or big box over it. Place a brick or large stone over the container to secure it. If confinement is not safely possible, try to watch the animal until the officer arrives.

Minimize contact between domestic and wild animals. Pet owners can take precautions such as having pets sleep indoors, walking pets on a leash, and feeding dogs and cats inside.

If a cat or dog or other mammal is exposed to a potentially rabid animal, contact a veterinarian and the police.

Prevent contact with wild or stray animals by keeping trash in closed cans and sealing off openings into your house that might provide entry to wildlife, including open areas under decks and houses, chimneys and pet doors. DO NOT FEED STRAY ANIMALS.

Don't keep wild animals as pets. Even a baby skunk or raccoon born in captivity can be a rabies carrier.

Whenever possible composting should be done in enclosed containers.

Last, but not least, HAVE YOUR PETS INOCULATED AGAINST RABIES!!

Both state and county ordinances require that dogs and cats four months of age and older be inoculated. Inoculation against rabies is not a one time shot – THE VACCINE MUST BE ADMINISTERED EVERY ONE OR THREE YEARS, DEPENDING ON THE VACCINE USED AND THE AGE OF THE ANIMAL