

Raccoons with Distemper

We are advising towns within Essex County that there is an increase in the number of calls we have responded to for sick raccoons. Many of the raccoons are showing signs consistent with the Canine Distemper Virus. The Canine Distemper Virus is generally always present in the raccoon population, however usually at low levels. In the Fall and during mild Winter conditions, distemper cases in raccoons tend to spike. When infected, raccoons may approach people or curl up to sleep in open areas close to people. In general, they act confused or slow, but **can become aggressive if cornered**.

Frequently asked questions:

What is Canine distemper?

- Canine distemper is a viral disease affecting animals' stomach, lung and brain
- Raccoons are likely to get this disease as are dogs, but it commonly infects skunks as well.

Can I catch distemper? Can my dog catch it?

- Humans can not catch distemper
- dogs not vaccinated for distemper can become infected if they come into contact with an infected raccoon
- Puppies who have not yet been vaccinated are at high risk
- To keep your pet safe, it is best to keep your dog on a leash when on walks and scan your property before letting your dog out

What are symptoms of distemper?

- move slowly and may stumble as they walk
- lose fear of humans
- may appear blind and confused and may wander aimlessly
- runny eyes and nose, cough, vomit, have seizures, diarrhea, tremors or chewing fits
- Distemper IS NOT rabies although some symptoms are similar

What do I do if I see a raccoon like this?

- contact Essex County Animal Control for help at 519-816-7627

Can we help the raccoons?

- The best way is to contact Essex County Animal Control who will ensure that the animal is humanely taken care of and that it does not continue to suffer or spread the infection

What else can I do to help?

- do no feed or leave food out for raccoons
- take down any bird feeders or regularly clean up the area around the bird feeder so you do not attract raccoons
- Ensure all garbage is disposed of properly
- Explain to your children why they should NOT approach raccoons or any wildlife even if they seem tame
- Vaccinate your dog against distemper

How are the towns helping?

- by sharing information with residents
- working closely with Essex County Animal Control Services

Essex County Animal Control Services has a 24/7 service available to residents to call if you notice a raccoon that looks injured, is slow, or has any of the other distemper symptoms. When a call is received, in the municipalities of Essex, Kingsville, and Leamington an animal control officer will respond. Raccoons that are acting normally and appear healthy can be trapped and relocated.

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