



## July Is Rabies Prevention Month



It's that time of year again...people and their pets are “out and about”, enjoying the beauty of the great outdoors. Unfortunately, it's not just people and pets who are venturing out: many kinds of wild life are also emerging. When people or pets tangle with wild life, rabies can spread. Fox, raccoons, deer, skunks, and bats can all carry rabies; so can our pets.

The good news is: there is a rabies vaccine! Be sure to protect your cats, ferrets, and dogs by having them vaccinated on a regular schedule. Letting their vaccine coverage lapse for even a short time puts you and your pets at risk. There is also a human rabies vaccine. This vaccine does have side effects, and is only given after exposure. So prevention is important! There are two remaining rabies prevention clinics for pets sponsored by Ontario County this year. Call Ontario County Public Health for more information.

Each year, Ontario County Public Health and the Humane Society receive hundreds of calls about preventable encounters with wildlife. If you see a raccoon, skunk or fox in your yard, stay away from it! Raccoons, especially, are likely to want to check out your garbage, so keep your garbage cans tightly closed. If one is too close for comfort, try scaring them off with a loud noise. If you can, let nature take its course. If raccoons and skunks pose any direct danger to you or your pets, however, call the Ontario County Humane Society at (585) 396-4590 during regular business hours or the Sheriff's Office at 585 394-4560 after hours.



Many people are concerned when they see raccoons, fox or skunks out during the day, but that really is quite normal. As more people have moved into Ontario County, there is less undeveloped land where animals can forage. They need to extend their searches for food into daylight hours.



Bats pose a different type of problem. They are “inscape artists” who can get into your house through the tiniest of openings. Bats like to roost in attics, behind shutters, and under roofing or siding. They can enter your home via chimneys or vents. Do your best to keep them out by caulking around windows, putting window and fireplace screens up and creating barriers around their “favorite” entrance ways.



Most bats are healthy, and contribute to the environment in many ways, especially by controlling the insect population, which is their primary source of food. Less than 4% of bats are infected with rabies, and they rarely attack humans. But even casual contact with a rabies-infected bat poses some risk of infection. If you find a bat in your room upon waking, or near an unattended young child, or being played with by your pet, do your best to catch the bat without directly touching it. When they land on a wall, put on gloves, and cover it with an empty coffee tin, a plastic food storage container or something similar. Use the top to the container to “trap” the bat inside the container by sliding the top along the wall to force the bat inside. Snap on the lid to keep it trapped. The Humane Society will arrange to have the bat tested for rabies if you contact them the following morning. Do not just chase the bat out of the house or away from you. If we can test the animal that may have put you at risk, you will not need to receive the human vaccine.

For your pets, remember to be safe rather than sorry. Keep their vaccinations up-to-date. Protect yourself by keeping a healthy distance between you and any wild life, as well as unknown dogs and cats. Inspect your window screens and cover your vents to deter the bats. Rabies is rare, but is deadly. Take these simple precautions to keep you and your animals safe!

