



**MassWildlife**

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

# Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Wayne F. MacCallum, *Director*

## ***Wildlife Rabies***

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) has legal authority over all wildlife. While the Division does not submit or test wildlife for rabies, DFW biologists would appreciate a report if a wild animal bites a person. DFW works to protect wildlife, people and pets by monitoring outbreaks of wildlife disease, sharing information with humane and animal health authorities, prohibiting the importation or relocation of wildlife, prohibiting possession of wildlife as pets, regulating wildlife populations through harvest of animals by licensed hunters and trappers and increasing public awareness of wildlife through education.

**Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system of mammals. If left untreated it is always fatal.**

Rabies is spread through a bite or a scratch from an infected animal. You can protect yourself, your family and pets by observing some precautions and following a few simple rules.

### **Pet Owners, Campers, Hikers and Other Outdoor Users:**

- Pets are the most likely bridge between rabid wildlife and people. Vaccinate all cats, dogs and ferrets. (This is the law.)
- Feed pets indoors, do not leave pet food outside.
- Avoid approaching or handling wild animals and NEVER feed wildlife!
- Secure your food and garbage beyond the reach of wild animals when camping.

### **House/Apartment Dwellers:**

- Avoid approaching or handling wild animals.
- Do not feed wild animals, use "clean design" bird feeders.
- Keep garbage and trash in containers with tight fitting lids and set containers out on the same day of trash pick-up. Do not put trash out at night! Keep dumpster doors closed at all times.
- Cap chimneys and seal openings in attics, basements, porches, and sheds or barns.

### **Schools/Businesses/Condominium Complexes:**

- Keep trash and food-related items in secure containers or closed dumpsters.
- Consider fencing off the area around the dumpster and keep it well picked-up.

### **Hunters, Fur Trappers, Problem Animal Control Agents, Taxidermists:**

- Wear rubber gloves and apron while skinning or handling animals.
- Consult a physician about receiving pre-exposure vaccination.
- Do not feed suspected sick or diseased wild animals to your pets.
- Cook meat thoroughly--heat destroys the virus.

### **If You Are Bitten or Scratched By a Wild Animal:**

- Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water.
- Seek medical attention immediately and contact your local health department.
- If possible, capture or kill the animal for testing. *Do not freeze the animal or its head.*

### **If Your Pet is Bitten By or Kills a Wild Animal:**

- Wear gloves when handling your pet.
- Contact your local veterinarian, animal control officer, or health department for guidance.
- If possible, capture or kill the animal for testing. *Do not freeze the animal or its head.*

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Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

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