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Rabies, Wildlife and how to protect your Family

**World Rabies Day is September 28:
LA Animal Services reminds community to vaccinate ALL dogs and cats**

Los Angeles, September 27, 2016 - In Los Angeles, you may encounter wildlife when you're walking your pet, playing outdoors with your children or jogging down a trail. As World Rabies Day approaches this Wednesday, September 28, the Department of LA Animal Services is reminding the community to be safe and keep away from sick and deceased wildlife that could potentially carry rabies.

Rabies is caused by a virus that is usually transmitted through the saliva from a bite of an infected animal. According to The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, bats are the animals that most commonly carry rabies in Los Angeles County. About one out of every 12 bats tested by the health department has rabies. Rabies can occur in other wildlife such as skunks, coyotes, foxes and raccoons but rabies has not been detected in other wild animals in the County for over twenty years.

Despite the low rabies cases, it's important to know that wildlife could have the fatal disease and to take precautions to protect yourself and your family including your furry family members. The best way to protect your family is to vaccinate your dogs and cats. State law requires, all dogs four months or older to be vaccinated. It is also highly recommended that cats be vaccinated.

If your pet encounters wildlife, especially if it is bitten or comes in contact with their saliva, wear rubber gloves when handling your pet, cleanse any wounds with soap and water and take him or her to a veterinarian for examination.

If you come in contact with bats and other wildlife, alive or dead, do not touch the animal with your bare hands. If you find a sick or injured wild animal, call LA Animal Services at 888-452-7381 and follow the prompts.

The following precautions are important to reduce wildlife in your neighborhood and to protect your family and pets:

- Never feed wildlife. It is against the law, under L.A.M.C. 53.06.5, to feed predatory mammals (badgers, bobcats, bears, coyotes, mountain lions, opossums, raccoons, skunks, etc.) in the City of LA.
- Animal-proof your trash. Put all trash bags inside the garbage cans and keep them securely fastened with tamper proof lids.
- Closely supervise children and pets while outside.
- When walking your dog, keep them on a leash. Don't let them roam free. It's against the law, under L.A.M.C. 53.06 to take your dog off the leash when off your property.
- Feed your pets indoors. Leaving food and water outside often attracts wildlife to your yard.
- If a wild animal is on your property, let it wander away. Bring children and pets indoors and alert neighbors who are outside.

Recently, during a public meeting, a citizen said that she has been feeding coyotes to keep them from eating her cats. This is not only illegal; it only encourages coyotes and other wildlife to move to her backyard where they can have a regular food supply. Although this lady meant well, she is really inviting more coyotes to her neighborhood and creating an unsafe situation. We must stop feeding wildlife and encourage them to move back to the undeveloped areas away from people and pets.

If you are ever bitten, scratched or otherwise exposed to saliva from wildlife, cleanse the contact area with soap and water. Call your physician or the health department and get medical attention immediately.

For more information about rabies, visit The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's website at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/rabies.htm>.

Los Angeles Department of Animal Services is one of the largest municipal shelter systems in the United States with six shelters serving approximately 60,000 animals annually and responding to 20,000 emergency calls involving an animal or person in danger. LA Animal Services promotes and protects the health, safety and welfare of animals and people.

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