

Diseases from Raccoons

❑ WHY BE CONCERNED ABOUT RACCOONS?

Raccoons have adapted to urban and suburban life and are commonly seen or encountered by King County residents in parks, neighborhoods or yards. Raccoons may carry diseases that can be spread to people (zoonoses) and pets. They can also cause serious scratch and bite injuries.

❑ RABIES

- ✓ Rabies is a disease caused by a virus and it is almost always fatal. It is spread through a bite by an infected animal. Although rare, it can be spread through infected saliva getting into an open wound.
- ✓ Rabies can be successfully prevented in people by giving rabies vaccines shortly after an exposure.
- ✓ Raccoons are the most frequently reported animal species with rabies in the U.S., specifically in eastern and southeastern parts of the country.
- ✓ Although there have been no rabies cases identified in raccoons in Washington State, we cannot be certain that rabies is not present in raccoons or that it may not occur in the future.
- ✓ All raccoon exposures including bites and scratches should be assessed by a health care provider and reported to Public Health. Raccoon exposures to pets should be reported to the Public Health Veterinarian.
- ✓ For more information see:
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_rabies.htm

❑ RACCOON ROUNDWORM

- ✓ Many raccoons carry a roundworm called baylisascaris. Infected raccoons pass baylisascaris eggs in the feces. Other animals and people can get infected if they accidentally swallow the eggs in soil or water. Developmentally disabled persons or young children who play outside are at highest risk.
- ✓ After the eggs are swallowed they hatch into larvae that move to different parts of the body and can cause serious illness within a week. Symptoms may include tiredness, lack of coordination, loss of muscle control, blindness, and coma.
- ✓ Baylisascaris infection is rare, but is believed to be underdiagnosed. Anyone suspected of having swallowed raccoon feces should seek health care immediately. Early treatment can prevent infection and serious illness.
- ✓ For more information please see:
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/baylisascaris

❑ LEPTOSPIROSIS

- ✓ Leptospirosis is a disease caused by *Leptospira* bacteria that are carried in the urine of rats, raccoons, and some other animals. People and animals can get infected when water contaminated with urine of infected animals gets on their skin, or in the nose, mouth, throat, or eyes, or is swallowed. Dogs are especially at risk and may die from the disease.
- ✓ Leptospirosis may cause influenza-like symptoms, severe head and muscle aches, high fever, and in some cases serious liver and kidney problems. Leptospirosis can be treated with antibiotics.
- ✓ For more information see:
http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/leptospirosis_g.htm
<http://www.metrokc.gov/health/prevcont/leptospirosis.htm>

❑ PREVENTING DISEASES FROM RACCOONS

- ✓ Discourage raccoons around your residence:
 - Never feed raccoons
 - Feed pets inside and store pet food inside
 - Keep pets inside at night
 - Prevent raccoons from entering your house through pet doors or other openings
 - Keep garbage cans inside and use locking or secured lids outside
 - Clean barbecue grills after each use
 - Use secure bins for food composting
- ✓ Avoid contact with raccoon feces and safely clean up areas where raccoons defecate (raccoon latrines) on your property.
- ✓ Avoid direct contact with water, soil and vegetation contaminated with raccoon urine.
- ✓ Contact an experienced wildlife control service for help cleaning up latrines and removing problem raccoons.
- ✓ Vaccinate cats, dogs and ferrets to protect them against rabies; consider vaccinating dogs for leptospirosis.
- ✓ For more information see:
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/raccoons.htm>

Report all King County human cases to Public Health by calling (206) 296-4774.

Report all King County animal cases to Public Health by calling (206) 205-4394.

Available in alternate formats.