

Caution- Be Alert to Raccoons Exhibiting Signs of Distemper

Coastal Resources staff and interns have responded to recent reports of raccoons exhibiting signs consistent with the canine distemper virus in the City of Orange Beach. On Saturday, May 16th, 2020, we received results from the lab tests confirming this suspicion. Distemper is not uncommon in a variety of species including raccoons.

Raccoons with distemper may approach people, or curl up to sleep in open areas in close proximity to people. They generally act disoriented or lethargic, but can become aggressive if cornered. They may also have seizures, show their teeth and have been known to stand on their hind legs.

Canine distemper does not pose a threat to human health however; dogs not vaccinated for distemper can become infected if they come in contact with an infected animal or its droppings, fluids, etc.

If residents notice a raccoon displaying abnormal behavior they should call 251-981-9777 to make a report and Coastal Resources staff will be contacted. Please note that merely seeing a raccoon, even during daylight hours, is not abnormal especially this time of year when they are with young.

Frequently Asked Questions about Raccoons with Distemper

What is Canine Distemper?

Canine Distemper (CDV) is a viral disease affecting animals in the canine families in addition to some other mammals. It affects the respiratory, gastrointestinal and nervous systems. Raccoons are pre-disposed to this disease, as are dogs. It also commonly infects foxes and skunks. The disease is most often fatal, and those that recover may display permanent neurological damage.

Can humans catch canine distemper?

No. Humans cannot get canine distemper.

Can my dog catch canine distemper?

Yes, if your dog has not been vaccinated against distemper, and comes in contact with a raccoon with distemper. Most dogs receive vaccinations as pups against distemper, and regular booster shots may be given. If you are not sure your pet is up-to-date, check with your veterinarian. Puppies not yet vaccinated are at particularly high risk. To protect your pet, keep your dog on a leash when on walks (it's the law) and scan your backyard before letting your dog outside even if you have a fence.

What are the symptoms of a raccoon with distemper?

Raccoons with distemper may move slowly and may stumble as they walk. They lose their fear of humans; appear blind, confused, and may wander aimlessly; and may become aggressive if cornered or approached. A mucous discharge will often be present around the eyes and nose and may be accompanied by coughing, diarrhea, vomiting, tremors, seizures, or chewing fits. They may only exhibit some of these symptoms and otherwise appear quite healthy.



What should I do if I see a raccoon that I think has distemper?

Do not approach them, keep an eye on its location if you can and call to report it, 251-981-9777

Should I feed the raccoons?

No. Do not feed raccoons or leave food out for them. This applies to ALL wildlife. Any food left out may only attract other wildlife, or attract sick raccoons to areas where pets frequent. If you feed your pet outdoors, only place out the amount of food it can consume in 30 minutes and remove any leftover. Do not leave food and/or water dishes out that infected animals may come in contact with.

What else can I do?

- Do not to keep or treat raccoons as pets
- Do not feed raccoons or any wildlife
- Do not leave food outside
- Make bird feeders spill proof and ensure that raccoons cannot get to them
- Store garbage in cans with lids that lock tightly.
- Cover sandboxes and similar items so they do not become raccoon latrines
- Remove drinking water sources for raccoons and other standing water.
- Seal all access points to your house and any other buildings nearby, including basements, attics, and sheds.