

RACCOON DISTEMPER



What is Distemper?

Distemper is a virus that infects the respiratory tract, the gastrointestinal tract, the spinal cord and the brain. It is generally always present in the raccoon population although at low levels. It is the second leading cause of death in raccoons.

How is it Transferred?

Distemper is highly contagious and is transferred through inhalation. This can include direct contact with raccoon feces, airborne droplets and bodily fluids such as saliva. It has an incubation period between 6-22 days. The virus can survive up to several weeks in dark/ shady cool environments but only a few hours in temperatures between 20 and 25 degrees Celsius.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of distemper?

Symptoms include but are not limited to:

- Discharge from the eyes and nose
- Walking as though they are on hot stones and/ or falling over or circling
- Glowing green eyes
- Unkempt fur
- Seizures and foaming at the mouth
- Disoriented, lethargic and overall loss of aggression
- May approach people or curl up to sleep in an open area

Who can get sick from Distemper?

Distemper is a canine virus that affects raccoons, it is also known as Panleukopenia in cats. Raccoons typically carry the strain that can be transferred to canine species including companion pets such as dogs and ferrets. Puppies between the ages of 3-6 months are at greater risk of infection.

Wildlife in our area that is at risk of getting infected includes raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes and weasels.

How can I help prevent my dog from getting distemper?

Most dogs are vaccinated as pups against distemper and regular booster shots may be given. If you are not sure, check with your veterinarian. To keep your pet safe, it is best to keep your dog on a leash when on walks and scan your backyard before letting your dog out.

Can Distemper be Transferred to humans?

Distemper cannot infect humans but if in contact with the virus, you can transfer it to your dog from your clothing.

Can Anything be Done to Help the Raccoons?

Once a raccoon is infected, there is little to no chance of survival for the animal. It can take several weeks for the disease to run its course in the raccoon. Young raccoons are most susceptible to this virus. The best way to help an infected animal is to contact the Oakville & Milton Humane Society who will ensure the most humane decision will be made for the animal and that it does not continue to suffer or spread the infection.

Can I Feed the Raccoons?

No. Do not feed raccoons or leave food out for them. Any food that is left out may only attract other wildlife, or attract sick raccoons to areas that pets frequent. Calling the Humane Society is the best thing you can do for these affected raccoons

How can I Prevent Raccoons from Coming onto my Property?

To discourage raccoons or any wildlife from coming onto your property:

- Do not leave any food out. At this time it would also be advised to take down any bird feeders, or regularly clean up the area around the bird feeder so you do not attract raccoons
- Ensure all garbage, recycling and GreenCarts are secure and left out on the morning of your regular pick up
- Keep your pet on a leash when on a walk and scan your yard before letting them outside
- Explain to your children why they should not approach raccoons or any wildlife even if they seem docile
- Check with your vet to ensure your dog has been vaccinated against distemper if you are not sure

Who Can I Call if I see a Raccoon that I Think has Distemper?

- The Oakville & Milton Humane Society has a 24/7 service available for residents to call in if you notice a raccoon that looks injured, is lethargic, or has any of the other distemper symptoms. When a call is received, the Humane Society officers will respond. Raccoons that are acting normally and appear healthy will not be picked up.
- If you have any further questions regarding Raccoons and Distemper please feel free to call **the Oakville and Milton Humane Society at (905) 845-1551**

How can I Make a Donation to help?

To make a donation to the Oakville and Milton Humane Society, you can visit us at **445 Cornwall Road** in Oakville or visit our website online at www.omhs.ca

