



Maine Guide Tips

“Rabies Alert”

Complimentary Information from the Maine Professional Guides Association

Rabies is an infectious viral disease that infects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. It is transmitted through the bite of an infected animal. Rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms are present although timely post-exposure treatment is effective in preventing the disease in humans.

Common Maine wildlife that carry rabies include: red foxes, striped skunks, raccoons, gray fox, woodchuck, coyotes and bats. House pets like cats and dogs, will often come in contact with infected animals and then become infected themselves, thereby increasing the risks to people.

How do you contract rabies?

Rabies is passed along through contact with an infected animal's saliva and is almost always transmitted when an infected animal bites an uninfected animal or person. People usually get rabies from the bite of a rabid animal. It is also possible, but quite rare, that people may get rabies if infectious material from a rabid animal, such as saliva, gets directly into their eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound.

Rabies & Wildlife Population Density

As wildlife populations increase, animal health becomes affected by competition for food and the more frequent interaction between sick animals and healthy ones. Rabies transmission within animal populations is dependent on population density or is at least density related. Thus, population reduction techniques have been employed to reduce susceptible animals below the threshold necessary for rabies to spread through populations.

Hunting & Trapping most Cost Effective Control Methods

Healthy wildlife populations make for safe and healthy human populations, as well as providing better enjoyment of our furry friends. It is therefore to our advantage to help maintain healthy wildlife populations, as determined by scientific wildlife management practices.

Bounty incentives, regulated hunting and trapping are all employed to control wildlife populations. In Maine, hunters and trappers provide this service “free of charge” and at the same time support the professional wildlife managers at Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife through license fees, tagging fees and taxes on firearms and equipment.

In absence of sufficient hunting and trapping activity, other programs are tried, such as hiring professional animal control agents to reduce the wildlife populations, reduce wildlife reproduction with contraceptives, or widespread inoculations. Unfortunately, these are all done at great taxpayer expense

Vaccines

Since 2003, Wildlife Services, a program within the US Department of Agriculture, has been working towards reducing the spread of rabies in northern Maine and east into New Brunswick, Canada because it is a threat to public health and safety. This program distributes special baits that contain an effective rabies inoculation.

The baits are coated with a fishmeal attractant and may be packaged in one-inch square cubes or two-inch plastic sachets. Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the baits, but are asked to leave them undisturbed. The vaccine, Raboral V-RG®, has been shown to be safe in more than 60 different species of animals, including domestic dogs and cats. Dogs that consume large numbers of baits may experience an upset stomach, but there are no long-term health risks.

Public Notice: Oral Rabies Vaccine in Aroostook County

On or about August 28, 2009, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and its cooperators will be distributing nearly 100,000 oral rabies vaccination (ORV) baits in Aroostook County to help prevent the further spread of raccoon rabies.

Wildlife Services (WS), in cooperation with the State of Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Maine Department of Agriculture, Division of Animal Health and Industry, will distribute the ORV baits targeting raccoons by hand baiting populated areas by vehicle and with a low flying fixed wing aircraft in rural areas over the 585 square mile area.

Please contact the Wildlife Services' office in Augusta, Maine at (207) 622-8263 to report dead or suspicious-acting raccoons, skunks, fox or coyotes. If you come into contact with the vaccine, or are bitten or scratched by an animal, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and contact your doctor and the Maine Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1-800-821-5821 in Augusta, Maine for advice.

Rabies Safety Tips

To help protect yourself against rabies, you should:

- Keep your pet's rabies vaccination current
- Do not to feed, touch, or adopt wild animals and be cautious of stray dogs and cats
- Feed pets indoors
- Keep garbage cans or other sources of food tightly secured
- Do not move raccoons or other wildlife from one area to another because this can spread rabies into new areas.