Animals that are low risk for spreading rabies can still expose you to other diseases. For instance, rabbits can carry tularemia, some rats and mice can carry hantaviruses, and, in certain areas of Texas, prairie dogs can carry plague.

In addition, if any animal bites you, it could cause an infection. You should also check with a doctor about the need for a tetanus shot because of a bite wound.

Remember:
For your safety and the safety of your pets, leave wildlife alone and in its natural habitat. This is best for the well-being of the wild animals, too.

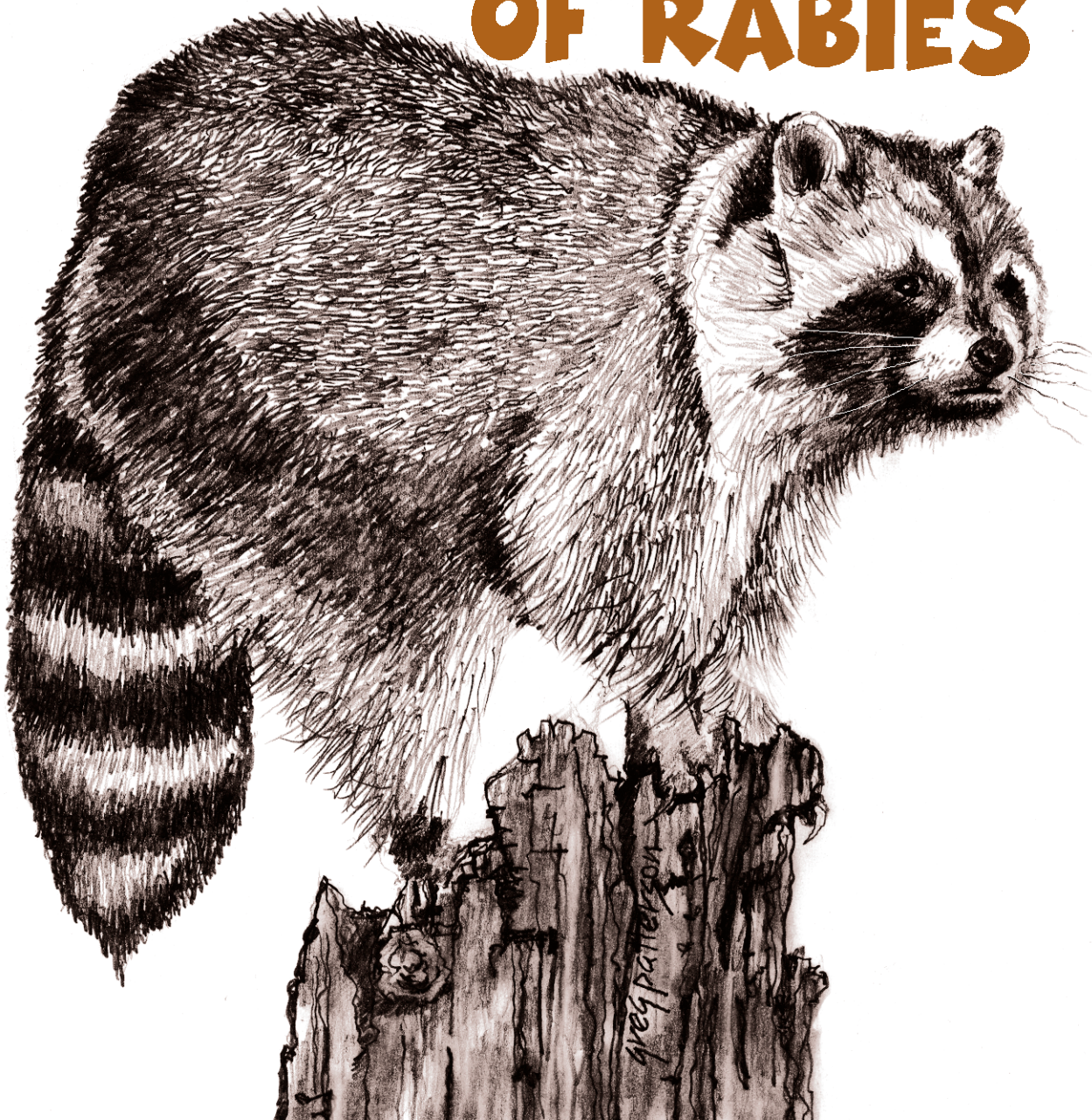
TDH

Texas Department of Health
Zoonosis Control Division

6/98 stock no. 7-16

Help Prevent Rabies
Leave Wildlife Alone

THE WILD SIDE OF RABIES



What is rabies?

Rabies is a deadly viral disease that affects the brain and nerves. You and your pets can get rabies from the bite or scratch of a rabid animal. You can also be infected by getting a rabid animal's saliva in your eyes, nose, mouth, or an open wound.

Where can I be exposed to rabies?

You can be exposed to rabies anywhere you encounter wildlife. This can happen when you are hiking, camping, or hunting. It is good to enjoy nature, but you need to respect and understand it. Be aware that rabies is a problem.

Rabid wildlife can also be found around farms and ranches, as well as in cities. In fact, they can enter your backyard. That is why it is so important to have your pets and livestock vaccinated against rabies. Do not attract wildlife to your home by leaving pet food out all night. Keep garbage in cans with lids that fit tight.

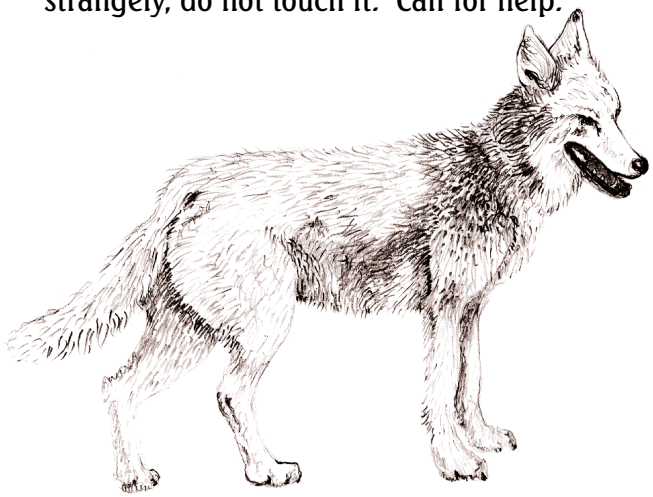
What animals can have rabies?

All warm-blooded animals can get rabies. However, some animals are more likely to become infected than others. Animals in Texas that are high risk for spreading rabies include: bats, skunks, foxes, coyotes, and raccoons.

What are the signs of rabies in animals?

A person cannot tell if an animal has rabies by looking at it. Sometimes rabid animals act friendly or tame. They are no longer shy or afraid of people. You may try to hand-feed or pet an animal that looks harmless and, in the process, expose yourself to rabies!

Rabid animals might also be having a hard time walking, flying, eating, or drinking. Animals that are usually active at night (such as bats, skunks, and raccoons) may be seen during the daytime if they are rabid. If you see an animal acting strangely, do not touch it. Call for help.



How can I prevent rabies?

Avoid contact with wild animals. Do not try to hand-feed them.

Do not try to keep wild animals as pets. Young animals are tempting to adopt because they are so cute. Besides the concern about rabies, remember that young animals will grow up and be hard to handle. Wild animals belong in the wild, not in your home! Also, it is against the law to keep certain wild animals as pets.

Do not touch sick, injured, or dead animals. Injured animals may be scared and in pain. Although you are trying to help them, they may bite you.

Have your pets vaccinated against rabies once a year. Restrain them and do not allow them to roam.

What do I do if I am bitten?

If an animal bites you, immediately wash the bite with soap and water. See a doctor as soon as possible. The doctor will help you decide if you need treatment to prevent rabies.

Note what the animal that bit you looks like and the place where the bite took place. Call for help and report this information.

Who do I call for help?

If you need help dealing with an animal that might be rabid, call a local animal control officer, health department official, game warden, law enforcement officer, park employee, or rabies control authority.

Can I get other diseases from wild animals?

Some animals can also spread intestinal parasites to people. Examples of these parasites include roundworms (*Baylisascaris procyonis*) from raccoons, tapeworms (*Echinococcus multilocularis*) from foxes, and a protozoan (*Giardia lamblia*) from coyotes. These are spread in the animals' droppings.