

City of Frankfort

Capital of Kentucky

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PROTECTING PETS FROM DISTEMPER

FRANKFORT, KY. – The City of Frankfort advises residents to be mindful of raccoons who may be infected with distemper. Distemper is caused by a virus and often occurs in raccoons, gray foxes, coyotes and, occasionally, skunks. Common symptoms in infected animals include respiratory distress, coughing, sneezing, watery discharge from the eyes and nose, crusty footpads, and diarrhea. Infected animals may also convulse, tremor, stagger, have chewing fits, become emaciated (thin), and lose fear of people. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife confirmed three raccoons found within city limits tested positive for distemper in December.

The virus is not transmittable to people, but raccoon feces may contain parasites which can infect people, especially small children, causing serious illness and organ damage. Care should be taken when cleaning up raccoon feces to avoid contact with skin and mucous membranes. Distemper can, however, infect unvaccinated dogs. The City of Frankfort recommends taking the following steps if you suspect an infected animal, and to protect your pets from the virus:

- Do not ever attempt to handle or capture any sick wildlife.
- If you see a raccoon or other animal that may be sick, contact a nuisance wildlife control operator through the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife. Local animal control officers do not handle infected wildlife. Use app.fw.ky.gov/nuisancecontrol to search a permitted wildlife control operator in Franklin County that can provide professional assistance.
- If you own a dog, make sure the animal's vaccinations are up to date with their veterinarian. The canine distemper vaccination will protect pets that may come in contact directly with an infected animal or through environmental contamination.
- If you feed pets outdoors, do not leave food outside or unattended for long periods of time. The food may attract raccoons and can be a transmitter to pets and other animals who may share the food.

If you ever come in contact with, or get bitten or scratched by a wild animal, call the Franklin County Health Department or a local health provider to report a possible exposure. For any cases regarding nuisance wildlife, please contact the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife. City of Frankfort animal control officers are available to respond to calls pertaining to domestic animals.

For more information, contact City Hall, 875-8500.



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