

July 7, 2025

Grey Bruce Public Health advising people not to handle, feed wild animals

Grey Bruce Public Health is advising residents and visitors to always enjoy wildlife from a distance.

Touching, handling, feeding, or attempting to care for a wild animal poses potentially serious health and injury risks.

In Ontario, raccoons, bats, skunks, and foxes are the most common carriers of rabies. Although the overall risk of getting rabies in Ontario is very low, a person can contract the virus if bitten or scratched by an infected animal or if an infected animal's saliva gets into an open cut or sore or a person's mouth, nose, or eyes.

"Summer is the time of year when people spend more time exploring the great outdoors, hiking and cycling local trails, and enjoying their backyards, campsites, and cottages. This time outdoors increases the chances of encountering wildlife, including animals that may be sick, injured, or appear abandoned. Grey Bruce Public Health is advising people to resist the urge to interact with wildlife. Always observe wild animals from a safe distance and never pick up or handle a wild animal," says Senior Public Health Manager Andrew Barton.

In the spring and summer, Grey Bruce Public Health typically sees an increase in reports of people being bitten or scratched by wild animals, particularly raccoons.

Wildlife interactions that result in a bite or scratch that breaks the skin must be investigated to rule out rabies.

Rabies is a rare, but potentially serious virus in Canada. It is transmitted to people through direct contact with saliva from an infected animal, usually through a bite. The disease is almost always fatal in humans and animals once symptoms appear.

Human cases of rabies are very rare in Ontario. One human case of rabies, acquired in Ontario, was reported in 2024. Prior to that, the last human case of rabies acquired in Ontario occurred in 1967.

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Rabies can be prevented by vaccinating susceptible animals and preventing human exposure to potentially infected animals. [Immediate medical care](#) after exposure to a potentially rabid animal can also prevent rabies.

Public Health advises people to do the following to prevent potentially negative interactions with wildlife:

- Stay away from wild animals and refrain from keeping wild animals as pets.
- Keep pets away from wild animals and do not let pets roam unsupervised.
- Wildlife-proof homes and yards.
- Warn children to stay away from wild or stray animals.
- Do not trap and transport wild animals to a new location.
- Do not disturb baby animals. Sometimes, people believe young or baby animals have been abandoned when, in fact, their parents have temporarily left to forage. Contact an [authorized wildlife rehabilitator](#) if the young or baby animals remain for a prolonged period of time. Do not pick up sick or injured wild animals. Call an authorized wildlife rehabilitator instead.

Visit GBPH's [Rabies webpage](#) for additional information, including the steps people should take if they are bitten or scratched by a wild animal.

For More Information:

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