

Distemper Outbreak in Raccoons

MARCH 2010

Overview. In the past 13 months, a large outbreak of Distemper has been occurring in Los Angeles County raccoons. This outbreak is a concern to all dog owners because dogs can catch this virus. So far, 137 total raccoon cases have been reported. In the same time period, cases were also reported in 41 dogs, 5 coyotes, 3 foxes, and 6 skunks.

What is Distemper? Distemper is a contagious virus that can infect dogs, raccoons, skunks, lions, tigers, and ferrets. People cannot catch Distemper. Distemper infects the whole body and suppresses the immune system. An animal infected with Distemper spreads the virus either by direct physical contact with other animals, or by contaminating the environment with mucus, vomit, or diarrhea. Vaccination against Distemper is a key part of basic veterinary care for dogs – it is the "D" in the DHLPP vaccine that all dogs should receive. Distemper outbreaks occur frequently in local dogs.



Baby Raccoon sick with Distemper.

What should I do?

- **If your dog has symptoms of Distemper,** seek help from a veterinarian. Keep it away from other dogs. Wear gloves while cleaning up mucus, vomit or diarrhea. Disinfect bedding and bowls frequently. Wash hands after handling your dog, especially before touching other dogs.
- **Vaccinate your dog (DHLPP vaccine).** One vaccination is not enough. Consult your veterinarian for details.
 - **Puppies** need a series of 3 DHLPP vaccinations, spaced 3-4 weeks apart, finishing at age 16 weeks. The vaccination must be boosted a year later, and then every 1-3 years.
 - **Adult dogs** with an unknown vaccine history need 2 DHLPP vaccinations, spaced 3-4 weeks apart. The vaccination must be boosted a year later, and then every 1-3 years.
- **Do not attract raccoons to your home.**
 - NEVER FEED WILDLIFE. Keep pet food and water bowls indoors, especially at night. Keep trash in sealed containers.
 - Cap chimneys, repair broken or missing vents and shingles on roofs. Seal access to spaces under homes and decks.
- **If you encounter a sick raccoon,** keep people and pets away from it. Call your local animal control agency. For a list, see publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/AnimalControlList.htm

Symptoms in raccoons

- Tired-looking
- Eye discharge
- Nasal discharge
- Disoriented
- Not afraid of people
- Circling
- Diarrhea
- Twitches, seizures
- Found dead
- Skinny

Symptoms in dogs

- Tired-looking
- Low appetite
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Nasal discharge
- Eye discharge
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Twitches, seizures
- Death