



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Wild Baby Animals Should Not Be Touched



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Media Contact:

Vermont Department of Health
Communication Office
802-863-7281

UNDERHILL – Nancy Carey remembers an abandoned baby raccoon she was able to save after taking precautions to avoid exposure to rabies. Those cases are rare, and her message after 24 years as a rehabilitator is: “Do Not Touch Wild Animals.”

If you see a baby animal that appears to be abandoned, contact the Vermont Rabies Hotline at 1-800-472-2437 (1-800-4-RABIES) and they will help connect you to a wildlife rehabilitator.

Sixteen of the 19 cases of rabid animals this year have been raccoons, and currently two baby raccoons are being tested for rabies at the Vermont Department of Health Laboratory.

“If you care, let us know it is there,” Carey said. “Once I am contacted and know there has been a possible exposure, it goes to a whole different level. I need to find out, was anyone licked, bitten or scratched, how was it handled, did you use bare hands, a shovel or a glove. People need to be completely honest with me – this is a very serious situation.

“They are not good pets. They are good squirrels, good raccoons, good skunks – but they do not make good pets.”

Once the signs and symptoms of rabies start to appear, there is no treatment and the disease is almost always fatal. There has never been a human case of rabies reported to the Health Department since the disease was first recorded in the state in 1963. The virus can spread through the bite of – or contact with – saliva from an infected animal. Rabies vaccine given soon after exposure is highly effective at preventing illness.

The baby raccoon Carey saved was less than one week old and suffered from a distemper disorder that made it hop and walk sideways. The animal seemed to have no chance in the wild, but was released near her home after a long recovery period. The raccoon later had babies and showed up every summer for seven consecutive years to stroll through her yard.

The Rabies Hotline is active Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The number for out-of-state callers is 802-223-8697.

For more information visit: <http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/rabies/Rabies.aspx>

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Vermont Department of Health | 108 Cherry Street | Burlington, VT 05402
Voice: 802-863-7200 | In Vermont 800-464-4343 | Fax: 802-865-7754 | TTY/TDD: Dial 711 first
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