LEARNING TO LIVE WITH URBAN WILDLIFE

I've got a raccoon in my yard! What do I do?

A raccoon running through your yard or an opossum on your wall is no cause for alarm. Do not overreact by assuming that a wild animal in the vicinity is a threat to pets or property. In the vast majority of cases such animals are utterly harmless, and are likely just passing through. Most wild animals that have not been desensitized by close contact with people are genuinely afraid of humans and will keep their distance. By taking steps to make the area uninviting we force them to move on to other areas in search of food and shelter. If you do choose to live peacefully with these critters, you should avoid feeding as this will create a dependence and desensitize wildlife to humans.

Remember that the person down the road may not be as compassionate as you are. Unfortunately, wild animals that have lost their wariness and have more contacts with humans tend to have shorter life spans. That's because they tend to be our problem or "nuisance" wildlife. They frequently are killed, poisoned or trapped. Relocating wildlife is illegal.

Compassion through Education

Misinformation and our own lack of knowledge about the temperament, nature and needs of urbanized wildlife has led to exaggerated fears, particularly of disease, and subsequently to much unnecessary animal suffering. Fortunately, there is no need to resort to painful traps or deadly poisons in our encounters with these wild animals. We can, with a little effort, learn to peacefully coexist. In fact, armed with some basic knowledge about their habits and a little ingenuity we can outsmart these critters without bringing harm upon them, nor guilt upon our consciences.

Mange

Mange is a type of inflammatory skin disease caused by tiny parasitic mites. There are two basic types of mange, sarcoptic and demodectic, which have separate causes and symptoms. Though mange is rarely fatal, knowing how to recognize this disease early makes treating the animal much easier in the long run.

Sarcoptic mange usually causes frantic itching Which causes relentless scratching or chewing at its skin to relieve the itch. The animals skin, becomes irritated from the constant scratching and biting and can easily become infected. The itching can even be so severe that it distracts the animal from necessary behavior like eating, drinking, and resting. Severe cases of sarcoptic mange that result in secondary infections from bacteria or yeast can cause a white, crusty surface to form on the animal's irritated skin. In addition, animals with severe secondary infections will also often suffer weight loss, possible anemia, run a fever, and/or have enlarged lymph nodes. All which can compromise the immune system.

While sarcoptic mange itself can't kill an animal, their health can deteriorate quickly if they get a serious infection or stops eating or sleeping.

Localized demodectic mange, the least serious variety, usually results in one or two "thin" or bald patches in the animal's hair. Usually, this small patch will not appear inflamed or irritated and will not cause serious itching, unless left untreated.

Juvenile Raccoon:

Admitted with 2 severed hind legs. According to a biologist with the Dept. of Fish and Game, very indicative of a non padded illegal leg hold trap. He was reported to have been seen for 2 weeks dragging his legs,before being caught.