

OAKLAND BOARD OF HEALTH

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The Oakland Board of Health wishes to urge residents to protect themselves, their families and pets from encounters with wildlife and the diseases they carry. These recommendations are simple and could save your life or that of a loved one.

Wildlife, such as Black bears, fed intentionally or unintentionally learn to associate food with people. In the spring, bears are coming out of hibernation and looking for something to eat. These bears are potentially dangerous and may forage for food wherever it can be found. Bears love birdseed! Limit the number of birdfeeders in your yard and frequently clean up any seed that drops to the ground. Note that in addition to bears, squirrels and rodents are attracted to birdseed.

Do not leave food out for other wildlife! Rodents, coyotes, and feral (wild) cats can carry rabies, a fatal disease that is indigenous to this area. Attracting these animals into your yard can potentially expose you, your family and pets to rabies. One need not be bitten by a rabid animal to contract rabies. Be aware that an animal in the early stages of the disease may not show symptoms. A person with an open cut coming in contact with saliva on the fur of a rabid animal or pet attacked by a rabid animal can be exposed to the disease. Seeking treatment as soon as possible after an exposure is critical. Be sure to report all animal-to-animal and animal-to-human scratches and bites to the Police Department and the Health Department right away for follow up.

The feeding of deer is not encouraged, no matter how cute they may appear. Besides eating flowering plants and vegetables in your yard, deer lose their natural fear of people when fed. More importantly, however, deer carry deer ticks. Deer ticks are carriers of Lyme disease, a physically and neurologically debilitating disease that is commonly found in our area. By attracting deer into your yard, you are increasing the chances that you, your family and pets are exposed to Lyme disease. Lyme disease is highly treatable if treatment is sought early on; however, in rare cases, it can be fatal if left untreated.

Coyotes are dangerous and are in our town!

There have been recent reports of coyotes killing small dogs in our area and one woman was reportedly observed being "stalked" by a coyote while out on her morning walk. A wild coyote can be as large as a big German Shepard dog and be ferocious when attacking what it thinks is prey. Take precautions and report all suspicious "large dogs" running loose to the Police Department. Animal Control will be notified by the Police Department.

What can I do? You can help by doing these simple acts:

Store garbage in airtight containers in a secure area. Keep garbage bins near the inside wall of a garage, basement or in a secure shed. Wash the containers with disinfectant solution at least once a week to eliminate odors. Put garbage out the day of disposal, not the night before.

Keep brush trimmed in your yard, wear protective clothing, use tick repellent according to the directions on the container, and check yourself for ticks after being outdoors.

Most important, **do not feed the animals!**

Oakland has local ordinances prohibiting the feeding of waterfowl and feral cats. Please obey the laws.

For further information, contact the Health Department at (201) 337-9254