

Canine Distemper in Massachusetts Wildlife

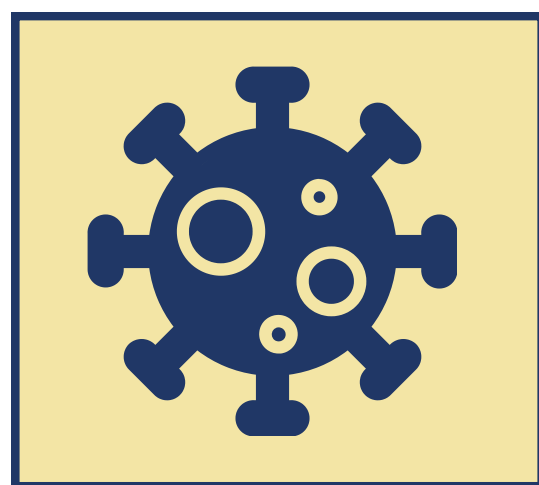


Canine distemper virus is an often fatal, highly contagious disease that impacts pet dogs, as well as wildlife like coyotes, foxes, raccoons, and skunks. Sometimes, it's mistaken for rabies. **Unlike rabies, canine distemper virus is not transmissible to people.**



Signs of infection

- Disorientation and aimless wandering
- Weakness
- Discharge from the eyes and nose
- Respiratory issues
- Snapping and jaw spasms
- Fearlessness and aggressiveness



How it spreads

Transmission occurs from contact with infected saliva, urine, feces, or respiratory secretions. Most wild canine distemper cases occur in the spring and fall. Distemper outbreaks often occur with dozens of local cases in a short period of time.



What you should do

- Keep your distance from animals that appear sick or disoriented.
- If you see an animal exhibiting signs of disease, contact your local Animal Control Officer by calling your non-emergency police line.
- Avoid feeding wildlife. Wildlife feeding sites concentrate a lot of animals in one place, creating the opportunity for disease to spread more easily.
- If you're bitten or scratched by a wild animal, report it to your Animal Control Officer and your doctor. Precautionary rabies treatment may be recommended.
- If you find a dead animal on your property, follow local regulations for disposal. Use caution and wear gloves or use a shovel to avoid touching the animal directly. In most areas, carcasses can be disposed of by bagging and putting it in the trash or by burying them.



Protecting your pets

- Vaccinate pets for rabies and canine distemper.
- Directly supervise your pets whenever they're outside.
- Keep pets on a 6' or shorter leash on walks and trails.
- If your pet has contact with a wild animal, report the incident to your local Animal Control Officer and your veterinarian.