

# Canine Distemper



## WILDLIFE HEALTH PROGRAM

### What is Canine Distemper?

Canine distemper is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus that attacks the respiratory, nervous, and gastrointestinal systems of infected animals. It affects a variety of wildlife, such as foxes, coyotes, skunks, and raccoons, as well as domestic dogs.

### What are the symptoms of canine distemper?

Both wild and domestic animals with canine distemper can exhibit a wide range of symptoms depending on the stage of disease and the host and age of the species. These can include difficulty breathing, coughing, sneezing, discharge from eyes or nose, diarrhea, lethargy, weakness, and later, neurologic signs such as seizures, "chewing fits" (snapping jaw), or loss of fear (especially towards people).

### How is canine distemper spread?

Transmission can occur through direct contact with infected animals or carcasses, as well as indirectly by inhaling aerosolized particles in an infected animal's urine, feces, secretions (i.e., discharge or vomit), or respiratory droplets. Contaminated food sources can contribute to transmission in wildlife populations congregating around human food sources like pet food left outside or unsecured trash cans or dumpsters.

### Does canine distemper pose a risk to people and other animals?

Canine distemper does not affect people, but it poses a risk to domestic dogs. Domestic dogs can be vaccinated against canine distemper. Speak to your veterinarian about vaccinating your dog to protect them against the disease.



### Prevent Canine Distemper

- Do not approach or touch wildlife
- Do not feed wildlife
- Do not leave pet food outside
- Secure trash cans
- Vaccinate pet dogs against canine distemper
- Keep pets away from wildlife

**IMPORTANT:** Symptoms of canine distemper and rabies are very similar. Do not approach any animal that appears ill or is behaving strangely as it may have rabies. Rabies is transmissible to people and 100% fatal once symptoms occur.

### REPORT SICK OR DEAD WILDLIFE

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