

EDITORIAL

with Dawn Brown

Protecting ourselves and our pets against rabies

One of the things that surprised me when my family moved to Acton almost 15 years ago was the amount of nature that was literally in our backyard. We've had visits from raccoons, skunks, possum, cranes, foxes, rabbits, and the list goes on.

For the most part, I enjoy sharing my corner of the world with furry friends like the bunny who frequently visits our backyard or the chipmunk that I suspect lives behind the storage bin on the deck. Despite some of my colleagues' misgivings, I even like hearing the eerie calls of the coyotes from the park at night when the wind is just right.

That's not to say there haven't been nuisances over the years like the skunk who sprayed our dog—ever notice how these things always seem to happen late at night and just before bed?—or the raccoon with whom I was in a long standing battle of wits to keep him out of the green bin. I'm happy to report I'm winning...for now.

To me that's all just part of living in a small town within a rural setting. However, lately all this nature has become just a little more threatening with the number of reported rabies cases on the rise. While there have yet to be any reported cases in Halton Hills, Burlington has already had two reported cases in 2017 and eight between October and December of last year. In late 2015, there a number of cases reported in Hamilton.

Rabies is an infectious disease that affects the brain. Any warm blooded animal can get rabies, including humans, and the virus is usually spread from saliva through a bite. Once symptoms appear, the disease is almost always fatal.

How do we protect ourselves and our pets?

Avoid wild animals, especially those behaving strangely, even if they appear friendly. The Town of Halton Hills encourages residents to report any animal behaving oddly to Halton Hills Canine Control Services 905-877-6235. Teach your children not to approach unfamiliar cats and dogs, observe wild life from a distance, and discourage wildlife from taking up residence in or around your home.

Have your pet vaccinated. It is now a Provincial law to vaccinate dogs, and failing to do so could result in a \$5,000 fine. Don't leave pets outside to wander, and bring your pet inside at night.

If you are bitten by a suspicious animal, clean the wound with soap and water, try to capture the animal if you can do so safely and without being bitten again. Call your doctor immediately, and report the bite to the Regional Municipality Health Department at 1-888-442-5866.

For more information visit the Town of Halton Hills Website, www.haltonhills.ca/canineServices/rabies.php, or The Region of Halton website: www.halton.ca/cms/one.aspx?portalId=8310&pageId=10207.



PANCAKE PROCEEDS: It was a 'Sweet Taste of Spring' at the Limehouse Memorial Hall Saturday morning. Kids of all ages enjoyed a pancake breakfast with syrup, sausage, baked beans and butter tarts. All proceeds from the breakfast went to support the hall, and was a great deal for families. — Vivien Fleisher photo

It is not just about vaccinating



By **Angela Tyler**

I'm a 'vaxer'. It's easier to publicly say one is a 'vaxer' than an 'anti-vaxer'. In non-slang terms, I (we) choose to vaccinate our children. We chose to take them to their doctor. We instructed the doctor to give them several rounds of needles at regular intervals from two months old to current. We chose to provide our children with a vaccination that would hopefully have them immune to such diseases as Diphtheria, Polio, Measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox and more. We are therefore "vaxers". Anti-vaxers choose not to immunize their children.

I'm not about to start the debate of whether one should or one should not. That is a personal choice. I do agree though that a local school board in recent years decided to clamp down on those with out of date immunization records and those students were facing suspension from school without the immunization.

There are many anti-vaxers and many famous ones as well. Jenny McCarthy, actress, actually says she isn't an anti-

vaxer stating she is pro-safe vaccine. Anti-vaxers have many reasons for not wanting to immunize their children. Some it is because they believe that the immunization can cause more serious diseases. For other's it could be religious reasons or perhaps the immunization has no affect on that child to prevent the disease. I also know that even though you have the vaccine doesn't mean you won't necessarily get something. Both our children who were immunized got chicken pox as did I when I was 23 years old.

However immunization may not be a guarantee it is documented that these immunizations help reduce the outbreaks or in some cases almost eliminate. Right now, there is a documented case of measles in Oakville. The Halton Health department has provided the public with specific dates, times and locations of the affected persons travel while they were

contagious. Included in these dates was a three hour stint at an Oakville Tim Hortons the day after a visit to a medical clinic. Why, after going to a medical clinic for presumed symptoms would one chose to go to a Tim Hortons for an extended period of time?

There are over 20 confirmed cases of Mumps in Toronto. Public Health is linking some of these cases to bars in the city. In the past year there has been several local outbursts of hand/foot/mouth disease in children.

Whether you choose to immunize or not, if you think you have symptoms or have come in contact with someone who has a contagious disease please seek medical attention and stay from public places until you are confirmed not to have anything whether it be a clear bill of health or a mis-diagnosis. Keeping diseases from spreading goes beyond vaccinations— if you are contagious you must consider others. The person who went to the medical clinic one day then the coffee shop for three hours the next day clearly didn't. Don't be that person.



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CONTACT US:
379 Queen Street East
Acton, Ontario L7J 2N2
Tel: 519-853-0051
Fax: 519-853-0052
E-MAIL:
General: thenewtanner@on.aibn.com
(including Advertising and Circulation)
Editorial: tannereditor@bellnet.ca
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