

Weekender

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Epidemic

Rabies spreading rapidly in region

TRACY KIBBLE
Staff Reporter

While local animal doctors say they haven't yet seen any rabid pets from the Whitchurch-Stouffville area, they warn the fatal disease is spreading rapidly throughout York Region.

This is one of the first years in a long time where both Durham and York regions have reported a rabies problem, making the issue a far bigger health threat than in other years, said Dr. Garry Gall of the Stouffville Veterinarian Clinic.

"This is the first year York and Durham have been in sync with the rabies prob-

lem. Usually one area or the other has the problem, but this year its hit both areas," Gall said.

And while there hasn't yet been any local domestic pets diagnosed with the disease, Gall said rabies is still "a major concern."

"There have been very high incidents in this area in particular of wildlife rabies cases. Foxes seem to be the major culprits for spreading the disease (throughout the regions)," Gall said.

The vet said anyone who spots a fox in the neighborhood should immediately become "suspicious" because the normally nocturnal animals stay away from residential areas.

"Just seeing a fox nearby is suspicious and their behavior should be considered an abnormality."

Gall said a pet or wild animal doesn't always have to act aggressively when infected with the disease — often times the animal will act docile instead.

He said one of the first things to look for if your pet has been away from the house is "fighting signs" such as open wounds.

Dr. Brian Laing of the Town and Country Animal Hospital in Ringwood said the low numbers of pets

turning up with rabies says a lot for the vaccine.

"Luckily there have been no pets turn up with rabies here and that means the vaccine is working," Laing said.

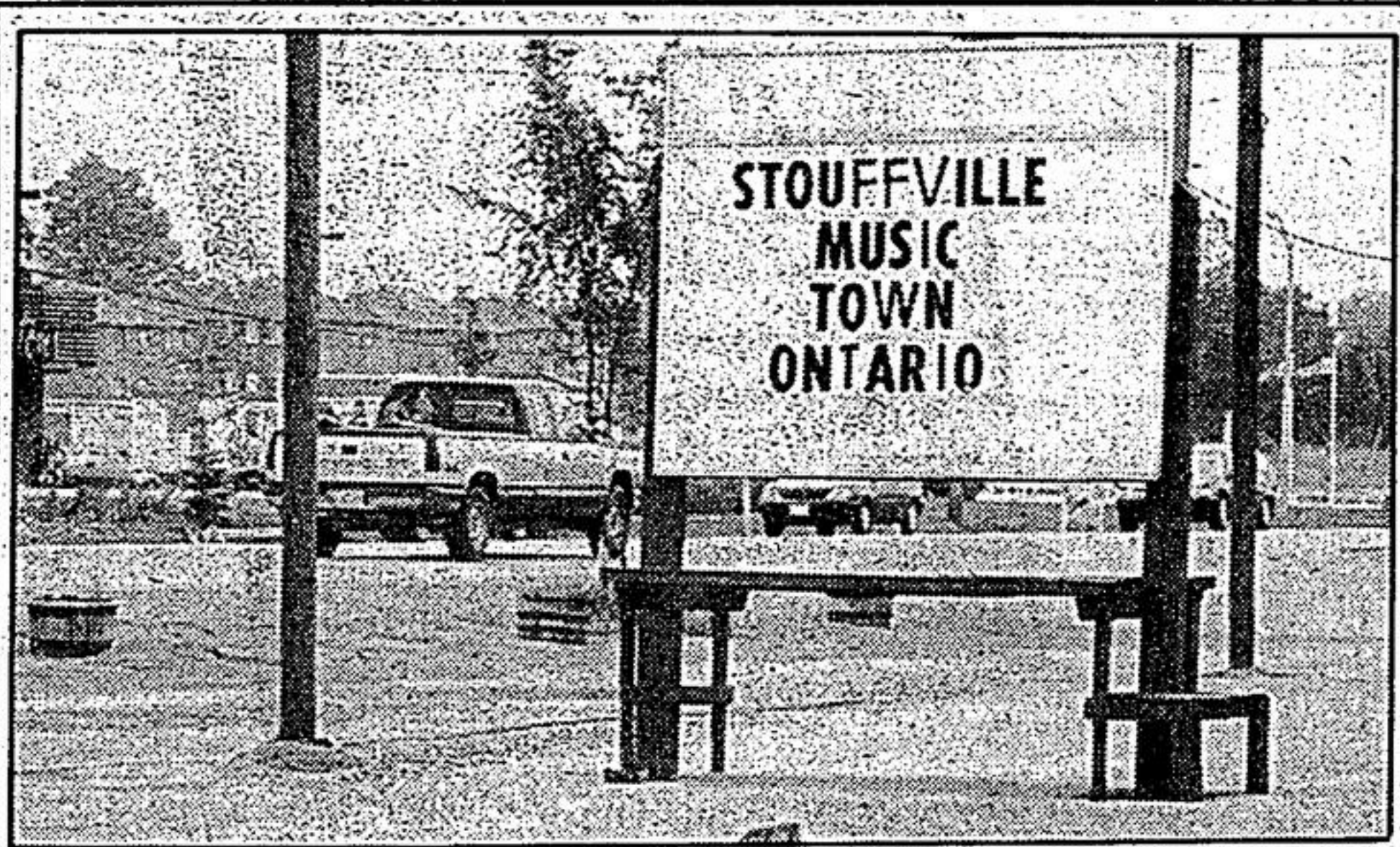
Laing said pet owners shouldn't put off vaccinating their cat or dog for even a week if they haven't already had their annual shot because of the high number of foxes, skunks and raccoons that have already been infected.

The doctor said 12 wild rabid animals have turned up in the neighboring Uxbridge area in the past

several months and only a vaccinated pet is protected from contact with an infected animal.

Meanwhile, Dr. Utpott, district veterinarian for Agriculture Canada, a division of the Natural Resources Ministry, said most of rabid animals from York are turning up in Georgina, Holland Landing and King Township.

Utpott said 14 infected wild animals have been captured and put away in the past 90 days alone just in York Region. He attributes the numbers to a "very high fox population."



Photo/LORI EMMERSON

This sign appears at the entrance to town on Hwy 47.

Music Town theme could be revoked

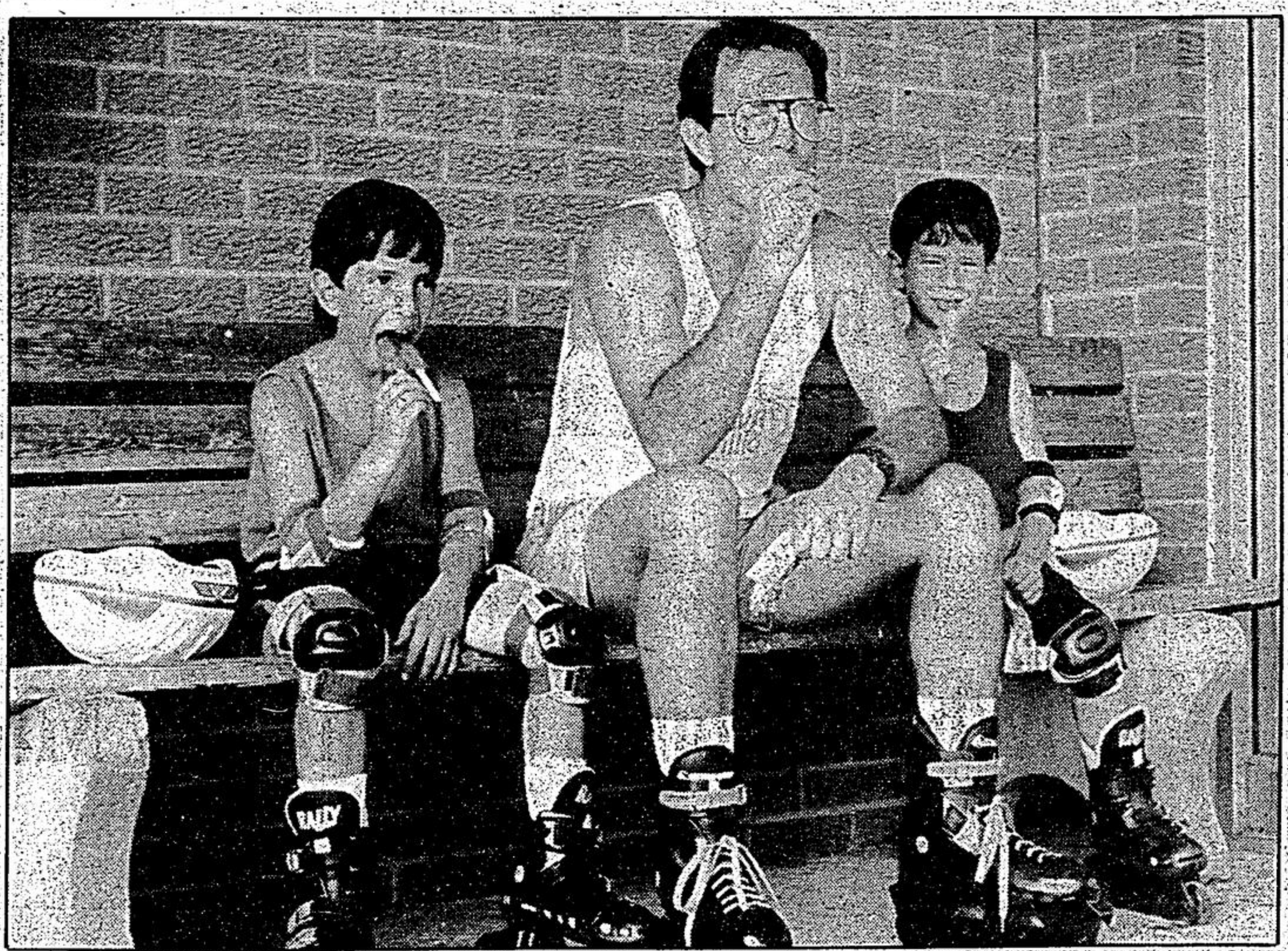
Town staff is expected to tell local politicians in October whether or not 'Music Town, Ontario' should be the community's future slogan.

Chief administrative officer Merlin Dewing told *The Tribune* that staff will present officials with a complete report regarding the Music Town, Ontario issue, including costs for signage and recommendations on whether the already-proclaimed symbol should be revoked.

Dewing said meetings have been held with business groups in town, including the Chamber of Commerce and the BIA to ensure members have an opportunity to voice concerns.

Resident Jim Thomas, who spearheaded the Music Town campaign two years ago, washed his hands of the matter two weeks ago when councillors refused to make a commitment toward funding of the signs.

(Please see page 2)



Photo/LORI EMMERSON

Blade break

Joe Andolina and his sons Corey, left, and Salvo, take a popsicle break after a hard afternoon's rollerblading around Stouffville this week.

McCallion reschedules visit to town

Hazel McCallion, mayor of Mississauga, has been forced to reschedule her visit to Stouffville in September. Originally, the mayor was to speak on small business operations in a recession on Sept. 1. However, McCallion has been called out of the country, and her visit has been rescheduled to Sept. 8 at 6:30 p.m. at Sleepy Hollow Golf and Country Club. The event costs \$20, and tickets are available from *The Tribune* and Card's.

Her visit is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and BIA.

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