

August 2009

# RM News & Notes

## Emergency & Operations Division Risk Management Department

### PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS

#### ***Why is getting the rabies vaccination so important?***

#### **It's the law:**

In Georgia, all dogs and cats at three months of age are required to have a rabies vaccination administered by a licensed veterinarian. Depending on the type of vaccine, they must be revaccinated every 12, 24 or 36 months. If the animal is not in your immediate control, they must also wear a collar with a current rabies tag and identification.

#### **Confirmed cases of rabies:**

In 2008, Columbia County had 12 confirmed cases of rabies...and so far this year we have had 6 confirmed cases: 3 raccoons, 2 foxes, and 1 bat. Another bat and two raccoons that came in contact with a cat and two dogs (with no current vaccinations) were sent off for testing.

#### **It's critical to protect your pet:**

One of the best ways to prevent rabies is to keep vaccinations for cats and dogs up to date. Even indoor pets should have rabies vaccinations. There was a case in which a woman found her unvaccinated, indoor cat with a bat in its mouth. The bat, which escaped, was assumed to have rabies, making for the tough decision of either euthanizing the cat or isolating it for six months.

**If anyone sees a wild animal staying in close proximity to their home, or if your pet comes in contact with a wild animal, please contact Animal Care & Control at (706) 541-4077.**

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#### Web Page

<http://www.columbiacountyga.gov/home/index.asp?page=2440>

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### Message from the Risk Manager

We are working to add a new feature to our newsletter, tentatively called the "Safety Officer's Corner" where the departmental safety officers are asked to contribute an article/information of their choice that is in some way related to health and safety. While you should be very familiar with the safety officer in your department, we hope this addition will give you a chance to get to know other safety officers as well as give these dedicated employees a chance to share their knowledge and expertise. Daniel Mayne, Animal Care and Control is the first contributor for this new feature and we found his information so helpful that we decided to continue the topic throughout the newsletter. While rabies might not be a choice topic of conversation for most of us, we all need to know how to protect our pets and even our families from this threat. So take a few minutes, read through this information and see if you learn something new. I know I did.

*Darlene*

### Some suggestions for reducing the risk of rabies transmission include:

Keep vaccinations current for all dogs, cats, and ferrets. This is important not only to keep your pets from getting rabies, but also to provide a barrier of protection for you, should your pet be bitten by a rabid wild animal.

Do not let pets roam. Keep your pets under direct supervision so they do not come in contact with wild animals. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately.

Call your local animal control agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood. They may be unvaccinated and could be infected with the disease.

Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.

Enjoy wild animals (such as raccoons, skunks, and foxes) from a distance. Do not handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.

Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Do not try to nurse sick animals to health. Call animal control or an animal rescue agency for assistance.



## What You Should Know about Rabies

Contributed by Daniel Mayne, Field Supervisor  
Columbia County Animal Care and Control

**Rabies** is a virus that attacks the nervous system of the host. Rabies can be transmitted even before an animal becomes symptomatic.

**Who/what can get rabies?** Any mammal, but most often found in wild animals like raccoons, foxes, skunks, bats and coyotes. Also domestic animals like cats and dogs.

### How do you get rabies?

The virus is transmitted through the saliva of a rabid animal, usually from a bite although you may also get it from a scratch if the animal had been licking its paws.

### What are the signs and symptoms of rabies in animals?

- Wild animal coming out during the daytime / May move slowly or appear tame
- Fearfulness
- Aggression
- Excessive drooling
- Staggering or seizing
- Any other strange behavior

### What should you do if you encounter an animal you think might be rabid?

**Stay away** and contact local animal control office or law enforcement

### What if you are bitten?

- Wash the wound thoroughly and vigorously with lots of soap and water for at least 5 minutes.
- If “on the job” notify your supervisor immediately so that the proper authorities can be contacted. Otherwise, contact local animal control officials and/or law enforcement. Seek medical advice to determine if you need shots or additional care.
- If safely possible: Capture the animal under a large box or container so that local animal control officials can collect it. Do not try to pick up the animal. If the animal cannot be captured, try to memorize its appearance (size, color, etc.) and notice where it went.
- If it is a wild animal, only try to capture it if you can do so without being bitten again. If the animal cannot be contained and must be killed to prevent escape, try to do so without damaging the head. The brain will be needed to test for rabies.

**What is the treatment for rabies exposure?** Once people develop symptoms, they almost always die. See your doctor right away if you’ve been bitten by an animal that might be rabid. Current treatment generally consists of a series of 6 shots over 30 days: one around the bite area and the rest in the arm.

## Policy Highlight

### Risk Management Safety and Loss Prevention Manual Page 59

#### Policy

#### Vehicle Safety

#### D. General Vehicle Safety:

9. When backing up a vehicle, it is necessary to see that the way is clear. The driver should get out of the vehicle when necessary and inspect the area to be backed into slowly. Horn to be sounded while backing when necessary. If there is another employee along, he will get out and direct the backing. **Drivers of dump trucks or heavy construction equipment are required to go to the rear of their vehicle to ensure the area is clear prior to backing the vehicle. Assistance from another employee standing near the rear observing for safe clearance is the recommended procedure.**

#### Discussion points regarding this Policy:

Ever gone out to get in your car and have trucks parked on both sides? You're trying to back out of the parking space and you have no way of seeing if there is anything coming. It was clear when you got in the car and you just back slowly, hoping and praying that no one hits you. Did you have any other options??? Check out this policy outlined above: If you have a passenger, ask them to get out and direct you back. Riding alone? Perhaps there is another employee (or even a stranger) who could "be your eyes" for a moment and help you back up safely. We've all seen the big trucks and heavy equipment use "spotters" to guide them back because they have limited visibility. Use this same technique, even in your regular vehicle whenever you find that you don't have a clear field of vision to observe any other traffic in the area.

Maybe you can see that there is no oncoming traffic, but you have to navigate through close areas or objects. Many people believe their perception of distance is much better than it actually is. Instead of "thinking" you have enough room and taking the chance: stop and put the vehicle in park, engage the emergency brake and get out of your vehicle. Walk back and look to make sure you have enough clearance. It may be inconvenient and take a few extra seconds, but it is a whole lot quicker and easier than dealing with that dented fender or scraped bumper.

One other suggestion that I find works even better:

Think about how you are going to exit the area before you park. Would it be safer to back into the parking space while you know the area is clear of other cars? Are there angled parking spaces or spaces in a different location that are easier to navigate? Can you pull into a driveway or parking lot that has an area to turn around rather than parking on the side of the road in tight quarters? Choosing where and how you park can help you avoid a backing accident.

### Up Coming Events

Each program is advertised by Risk Management and is available to employees of Columbia County Board of Commissioners and the city employees of Grovetown and Harlem. Additionally, the Defensive Driving Courses may be attended by immediate family members of employees, on a space available basis, for a nominal fee.

**Pre-registration is required.**

For additional information or to register contact Risk Management. 706-312-7475

**Safety Review Board      October 8, 2009**

**Defensive Driving      August 20, 2009**  
**Course – 8 hour      September 22, 2009**  
**October 27, 2009**

**Defensive Driving      October 6, 2009**  
**Course – 4 hour**

**CPR/AED/First Aid      September 10, 2009**

**County Office Closed      September 7, 2009**

### Holidays

September 7, 2009



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**October 31, 2009**

