

Wildlife Safety

Spending time outdoors is a favorite activity for all ages and, like many things, comes with its own unique set of risks. One outdoor risk often overlooked is wildlife encounters. As a result, animal bites and attacks cause many injuries and fatalities each year. While these incidents are often unintentional, it's important to understand they are also preventable.

The most common types of animal encounters include domesticated animals like dogs and cats; and wild animals such as skunks, foxes, bears, coyotes, raccoons, snakes, squirrels, or bats.



Safety First When Around Animals

Most healthy, wild animals want little to do with humans. Interactions are usually the result of a quest for food.

Reduce encounters by:

- Cleaning and properly storing all cooking supplies after use.
- Considering how odors may attract animals from cooking or open food containers.
- Limiting where you eat; avoid eating or storing food in areas such as tents, bathrooms, etc.
- Sealing all waste tightly in plastic bags – storing bags in animal-proof receptacles located at a safe distance from any community areas.
- If available, storing food indoors in locking, odor-proof containers. If outdoors, hanging food from a tree branch at least 20 feet off the ground and 8 feet away from the trunk.
- Not feeding wild animals! Avoiding contact and keeping a safe distance.

Take care when approaching injured or sick animals or wild animals who appear unafraid of human interaction. Take these precautions:

- Do not attempt to capture them.
- Stay away from any wild animals that appear sick or otherwise approachable.
- Make noise to deter the animal from coming near you.
- If necessary, seek safety in a structure with a door you can shut and lock.
- Contact park staff or other authorities to report what you witnessed.

Domesticated animals likewise raise concern as some of the most common animal injuries are bites from household pets. Protect yourself and others by:

- Asking permission before approaching a domesticated animal, especially one you don't know.
- Never put your hand out to an unfamiliar animal, instead keep them behind your back, allowing the animal to approach you first.
- Remember, any pet may become aggressive if surprised, stressed, or interrupted while feeding.

After encountering unwanted contact with any wildlife or domestic animal, wash your hands and the contact areas immediately with soap and water. Seek first aid if necessary. Your healthcare provider will be able to determine the risk for rabies or other illnesses.