

Rabies Awareness Month provides a reminder to avoid contact with wildlife All animal bites, scratches must be reported to Health Department

Whitby, Ontario – May is Rabies Awareness Month, and Durham Region Health Department is reminding area residents to avoid contact with wildlife, as rabies is commonly associated with bats, foxes, skunks and raccoons. Infected animals can transmit the rabies virus to humans through bites, scratches, or saliva. Although rabies is a preventable disease, it is almost always fatal for humans and most animals once infection occurs. In 2024, six bats in Durham Region tested positive for rabies.

Educators, including those in schools and child care centres, play an important role in teaching children about wildlife safety. Children should be reminded to avoid contact with wild animals and to quickly tell an adult if they come across a sick or injured animal. If such an animal is found on school property, it should be safely confined, and direct contact should be avoided. The Health Department should also be notified to determine potential human exposure.

Additionally, when visiting outdoor spaces like conservation areas or local parks, everyone should follow all rules against feeding wildlife to help prevent being bitten or scratched.

The following precautions are recommended to help avoid possible exposure to rabies from wild animals:

- Avoid contact with all wild animals, especially bats, foxes, skunks and raccoons.
- Keep children away from wild animals.
- Keep pets away from wild animals; pets should be kept indoors at night or should be supervised when outside.
- Avoid contact with dead or sick wildlife and do not attempt to care for these animals. Contact your local animal service and ask for assistance.
- If a potential exposure to humans occurs, contact the Health Department for assessment.
- Dogs and cats can also transmit the rabies virus to humans if pets become infected. To safeguard both pets and people, it is important for animal owners to take preventative measures to protect their animals from rabies.

"A key component of rabies prevention and control is responsible pet ownership, which includes maintaining up-to-date immunization against rabies for all dogs and cats over three-months old. This is required under Ontario Regulation 567/90 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act," said Brenda Kwan, Manager, Health Protection with the Health Department. "Pet owners can protect their families and pets by ensuring all dogs and cats receive annual vaccination against rabies."

- Responsible pet ownership also includes:
- Keeping vaccinations up-to-date for all dogs, cats and ferrets.
 - Keeping your pets under direct supervision and avoiding contact with wild animals.
 - Calling your local animal control agency for instructions on having sick wildlife removed from your neighbourhood.
 - Having your pets spayed or neutered to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.
 - Reporting all animal-to-human bites and scratches to the Health Department.



Deep In The Heart...

By Wayne & Tamara

I went on a trip to Texas with my three children and a girlfriend. Looking back now, I should not have taken my friend. She is a drama queen to the max. We were staying with my dad, and the reason for the trip was to meet my sister I didn't know about until two years ago.

Mom and dad split when I was two, and he was never part of my life. We have a fairly tense relationship as he doesn't know how to be a dad. As a child my mother told me horrible things about him. My girlfriend added to the stress by sitting my dad down and giving him advice.

One night my dad made margaritas. My friend had three and was toast. He offered to show her his collection of prize classic vehicles he's restored. These cars are his pride and joy, and he shows them off every chance he gets. An hour or so later he headed to bed, and my girlfriend gave him a hard time about it.

She said, "What if I run out of margaritas?" He said, "Well then, come wake me up, and I'll make you more." She took this as a come-on and decided he was trying to hook up with her. Neither my sister nor I saw this as a come-on, but my girlfriend wouldn't let it rest. She brought it up continually for the rest of the week.

As the week came to a close, I was soaking in every last moment with my sister. Six days just wasn't enough to make up for 23 years. My friend barged into our conversation, talking nonstop about a relative's marital problems. Next morning she asked if we could swing by someone's house for a quick goodbye before our 16-hour drive home.

Her quick goodbye turned into 45 minutes. My 3-year-old was screaming bloody murder, and I was exhausted. Four hours into the trip I let loose. I told her she was rude. I said she was mighty full of herself to think every guy wants her. I also told her I was never going to wear the pair of short shorts she bought me for my birthday.

I know words are like toothpaste, and once you squeeze it out it doesn't go back in. So I wrote her an apology. I said in some ways you are still that chubby little girl who has low self-esteem. Despite what you feel inside you are a beautiful woman with the heart the size of all those Texas egos.

I said you are Mother Teresa in some ways. I say in some ways because I'm sure Mother Teresa would never break out a permanent marker in a bar bathroom and write on someone's naked fat butt like you did, but the truth is I miss you.

I haven't heard back, and it's been three months.

Bonnie

Bonnie, if this woman and a stranger were on the bank of a river and you fell in, we'd bet on the stranger to jump in and save you. Your friend might say, "I can't imagine Bonnie wants me to jump in and get this outfit wet."

People have a hard time accepting they have friends who are not friends, just as people have a hard time admitting they married the wrong person. But both can be true. You offered to make up with her. That is enough.

Somehow you have lost the definition of the word "friend." A friend is someone you can count on, someone you can tell your deepest secrets to and they will never tell. Cicero said we may as well take the sun out of the sky as take the friendship out of life. A friend, he said, is a second self. But his words apply to true friends, not drama queens.

Wayne & Tamara

Ontario Supporting Victims and Survivors of Crime

DURHAM – The Ontario government is investing more than \$3 million to support victims and survivors of crime. The funding is being delivered through the Victim Support Grant (VSG) program and includes \$ 150,000 for the Durham Regional Police Service.

Project C.O.M.F.O.R.T will give Durham Regional Police Service, working with Bethesda House, the ability to provide short-term shelter, without delay, to survivors of trauma associated with gender-based violence, sexual violence and human trafficking. This will provide immediate security and trauma-informed support to those who need it most. From this investment, Victim Services of Durham Region will receive \$23,000 to support the development of the Child and Youth Advocacy Centre and will workcollaboratively with Durham Regional Police Service on a joint gender-based violence awareness campaign. This funding will also support collaboration between Victim Services of Durham Region, the Durham Regional Police Service, and Bethesda House for the addition of another shelter bed in Bowmanville, which can be used in acute crisis situations where Victim Services of Durham Region is on site and a victim is needing shelter immediately. "The safety of all Durham residents, modernizing the delivery of policing services and prioritizing crime prevention and victims of crime are vital components of healthy and vibrant communities," said Lorne Coe, MPP for Whitby, and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence, and Security. "By equipping Durham Regional Police with the resources they need, we are strengthening frontline services and ensuring more compassionate, timely, and effective support for those impacted by violence and exploitation." "Our government recognizes the devastating impact that crime can have on its victims and survivors," said Solicitor General Michael Kerzner. "Through this grant program, we're helping to ensure that victims of crime feel safe and supported."

The Victim Support Grant is part of Ontario's Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy and complements the province's \$307 million Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy, 2020-2025 and Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021.

"This investment is about ensuring families in Durham Region can count on timely, high-quality emergency care when they need it most," said Peter Bethlenfalvy, MPP for Pickering-Uxbridge. "By supporting our local emergency departments, we're strengthening frontline services and making sure help is always close to home." "Under Premier Ford's leadership, our government is investing in programs that address the root causes of intimate partner violence, and support for victims and survivors in Durham Region," said Todd McCarthy, MPP for Durham. "This funding will strengthen the partnership between Durham Regional Police, Victim Services of Durham Region, and the Community Development Council of Durham to deliver monthly education sessions for newcomers and connect them with local resources."

"Project COMFORT assists DRPS and our community partners. Victim Service of Durham Region and Bethesda House to better serve and support victims of intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, and human trafficking/child abuse. Not only does this funding support multi-sectoral teams to support these vulnerable populations, it also ensures we have the necessary tools and technology to conduct effective investigations, especially when facing increased disclosures and the use of ever-changing technology, such as cellphones."

- Chief Peter Moreira, Durham Regional Police Service
"This funding is a vital step toward establishing the Durham Child and Youth Advocacy Centre—a safe, centralized space where children and youth who have experienced abuse, neglect, or exploitation will receive trauma-informed, culturally responsive support through the collaboration of over 30 partner agencies and led by Victim Services. In addition to supporting the CYAC's development, the funds will support our joint efforts to raise awareness on gender-based violence and coordinate efforts to ensure families impacted by violence can access the wraparound care they need to heal." - Krista MacNeil, Executive Director, Victim Services of Durham Region / Durham Child and Youth Advocacy Centre

"Having immediate access to safe housing empowers victims and survivors to escape abuse the moment they're ready. It eliminates the heartbreaking choicebetween safety and shelter. With shelters across the province regularly operating at full capacity, this funding is not just helpful—it's essential for protecting lives and ensuring community safety."
- Riley Spigarelli, Executive Director, Bethesda House

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