

## **THE WILDERNESS AND YOUR PET**

I would like to tell you about 3 nocturnal mammals that pose a threat to our pets. If your pet goes outdoors, always make sure that you bring it indoors before it gets dark. If you own a dog, it is advisable to accompany it outdoors after dark. If you exercise it in the woods during the daytime, have it by your side in case it disrupts a wild animal during its sleep time. By doing the above, you may minimize your pets' risk of coming in direct contact with dangerous wildlife.

**SKUNKS** are creatures that defend themselves with an unbearable noxious odor that is emitted from their anal gland sacs, (scent glands), when they are frightened. If your pet is sprayed it may take months of bathing and time for the odor to disappear. The spray can cause immense irritation to your pet, particularly in the eye, the area most often affected. Also, skunks carry the fatal rabies virus, which can be transmitted by a bite. This is a concern to both you and your pet.

**PORCUPINES** - protect themselves from dangerous situations by releasing their sharp, barbed quills into their aggressor — usually into the facial areas. If your pet is attacked, it is advisable to seek the assistance of your veterinarian. Quills often appear superficial on the outside of the muzzle; however, in 80% of cases they are lodged in the back of the throat. **DO NOT CUT** the quills off, and if you attempt to remove them yourself, be careful not to break a quill, as this will require an anesthetic and surgery to recover the broken end.

**COYOTES** - very close to home for me. In the past 10 years the coyote has become very abundant in both rural and urban areas. Since a rabies vaccine baiting program years ago the species has thrived. Rabies virus used to be its primary natural cause of death, but is no longer. Nearly a year ago, I witnessed three coyotes taking one of my cats from my verandah. They killed him. It broke my heart. It was at that point that I realized how fearless they are of society, i.e. our gardens and dwellings. I have heard similar horrific stories from my clients who live in the country, and alarmingly from those who live in town. These stories relate to cats and dogs alike.

It is up to us to keep our pets safe and happy. Please take care of them.