



## **Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **ANIMAL SHELTER WARNS OF INCREASING REPORTS OF DISTEMPER**

The Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter is renewing a call for residents to have their companion animals vaccinated after a sharp increase in the number of reported cases of raccoons infected with distemper.

The disease has a high mortality rate in raccoons, and while it poses no threat to humans, it can infect companion dogs and cats through bodily secretions or waste. Signs of distemper often begin with respiratory symptoms such as high fever and reddened eyes, but progress to include lethargy, anorexia, vomiting and diarrhea, and finally disorientation and other bizarre behavior.

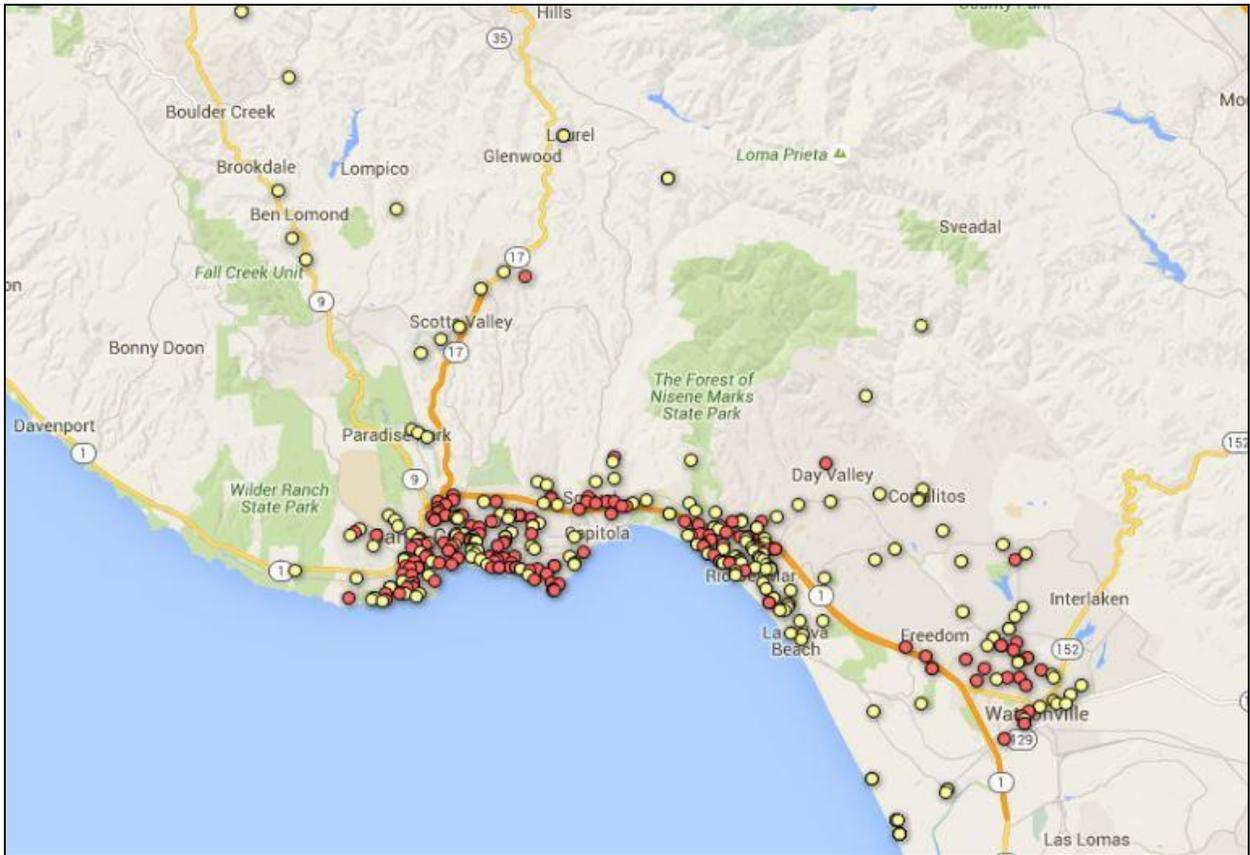
Since the beginning of 2015, the county has received more than 400 reports of raccoon distemper. The cities most impacted are Santa Cruz (195 reports), Aptos (100), and Watsonville (79). Last month, there were 66 reports in the city of Santa Cruz alone, concentrated in the Seabright, downtown and the West Side neighborhoods.

The problem is also accelerating. Through the first 10 months of 2015, there were 185 reports of possible raccoon distemper. In the last three months, there have been 220. If you see a raccoon suffering possible distemper, please call Animal Services at 831-454-7227.

The Animal Shelter is offering the following tips to homeowners and pet owners:

- Vaccinate your dogs and cats.
- Although distemper poses no threat to humans, anyone bitten or scratched by a raccoon must contact their physician immediately.
- Feed pets indoors.
- Those who feed pets outdoors should take special care to remove any leftover food. It can attract infected animals not completely debilitated by the disease.
- Please do not feed wildlife. Feeding wildlife may lead to large concentrations of animals around food, increasing the spread of disease.

- Restrain your pets; do not allow them to roam. Keep dogs on a leash when outside your property.
- If you observe a sick wild animal, do not approach the animal.



*Reported Santa Cruz County cases of potential distemper in raccoons since January 2015. Source: Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter*

**Key:**

- Distemper reports, January 2015 through November 2015
- Distemper reports, December 2015 and January 2016

NOTE: Embeddable map code available upon request.