Distemper ... Continued from A-1

"By the time any animal exhibits these symptoms, it will die within a few days," Gillin said. "It's a terrible way to die, an animal in this state is experiencing horrible pain. It should be euthanized immediately, but it's best to call someone to take on the risk of dispatching the animal."

"With both rabies and distemper, like with most viruses, as soon as the animal is dead, the virus dies quickly," said Rosemary Stussy, ODFW Rogue Watershed Wildlife Biologist.

"If you kill a sick wild animal yourself, bury it, wrap it in plastic and put in the garbage, or toss the carcass into the woods for other animals to eat."

"Distemper occurs naturally in raccoons, foxes, coyotes, skunks. We see it every spring and fall, primarily in raccoons, it's almost as if they harbor it," Stussy said. "Once there's a cluster of distemper, it's usually persistent for a season or two, but this current cycle in the Illinois Valley has stuck around since last February and hasn't really died off. And no doubt the volume of wild animals contracting distemper is increased by unvaccinated pets spreading the virus."

Before reaching end stages of the disease, dogs with canine distemper can have any number of symptoms: including fever, depression, appetite loss, discharge from nose or eyes, coughing, diarrhea, vomiting, seizures and muscle twitching. Veterinarians say 50 percent of dogs with distemper will die.

"People need to be reminded to vaccinate their pets," said Bonnie Petersen, Office Manager at Dr. Joe's Pet Hospital. "It's especially critical in young animals, who are more likely to contract diseases. A lot of people with new puppies want to take them around everywhere, but puppies should be isolated until they're vaccinated."

Some people buy vaccinations for distemper, parvo-virus and other pet diseases from farm and feed stores, but professionals caution against this practice. Only from a licensed veterinarian can a customer be sure the medicine has been properly refrigerated from manufacturer to clinic.

"Someone who is used to giving shots will do a better job of it," Gillin said. "The dog might jump when it gets stuck and you end up with more vaccine on the fur and your pet only gets a low dose. Or, by the time you get it home, it may have warmed up too much. Another reason to go to your vet for shots is because they'll also do a health check and notice if your pet is already sick. When sick animals are vaccinated, vaccines are less effective."

Over the last 100 years, rabies in the United States has changed dramatically, according to the Center for Disease Control. Before 1960 the majority of rabies occurred in domestic animals; but now, due to domestic animals spreading the disease, more than 90 percent of rabies occurs in wildlife. Nationwide, rabies-related human deaths declined from more than 100 annually in 1900 to one or two per year in the 1990's. Vaccinations in pets and early treatment for people after being bit have been very effective.

Stussy and Gillin want anyone observing sick wildlife to call a hotline to help the agency track sick animal clusters. Call 866-968-2600.

Jenna ... Continued from A-1

While school coaches were trained in identifying concussions and keeping players off the field until cleared, they were not legally protected. Even if a coach did everything possible to prevent a concussion, parents of athletes could still take legal action against the coach and anyone else involved for gross negligence.

By the age of 19, Jenna Sneva was a national gold medalist in skiing but dealt with severe headaches, blurred vision and other symptoms. Eventually Jenna learned she will never be able to ski again. Why? After going from doctor to doctor and not getting any answers, Jenna and her family finally got answers as to why she experiences so many headaches. She suffers from post-concussion syndrome.

Over Jenna's skiing career she suffered from ten concussions, always getting up and "dusting" herself off after taking severe falls, never really seeking medical advice about possible concussions. After receiving her diagnosis from a doctor at OHSU Concussion Program, Jenna, along with her family, doctor and legal professionals began a campaign to improve Max's Law and further protect not only school athletes but club athletes as well.

In September 2013 Governor Kitzhaber signed SB 721, or Jenna's Law. Jenna's Law took effect on January 1, 2014. This law further improves on Max's Law which before only required school coaches to be trained in concussion recognition. Now, not only are school coaches required to have training, but club coaches, all umpires and referees who volunteer on a regular basis are required to be trained in knowing concussion prevention and what to do when an athlete sustains a concussion. Also, coaches and referees are better protected legally under Jenna's Law. If a regular volunteer has gone through the proper training and follows the guidelines required, it is more difficult for that person to be held liable if an athlete sustains a concussion. The only way the coach or umpire/referee would be liable is if they showed gross negligence or willful or malicious misconduct.

Jenna still suffers from the many concussions she endured over the years but has learned to cope. She currently is attending college and working to educate people on the effects of concussions if they are not dealt with immediately and proper medical attention is not sought out.

What club sports fall under the new law and what does this mean for club sports? Any non-school sport falls under the new law. This could include wrestling clubs, Little League, Boys and Girls Club sports, Pop Warner, soccer clubs and any other sports that are not included in school activities.

Many sports clubs already have safety plans in place to keep athletes and volunteers safe; for instance CPR, first aid and background checks may be a requirement before being allowed to volunteer for some organizations. With Jenna's Law now in effect, those groups will have to ensure that each regular volunteer will receive the proper training.

What can parents do to help in the prevention of concussions? Be aware. Being aware of what the school's or club's safety procedures are in case of an accident or injury is a good way of helping to prevent concussions. Also know the basic signs of a concussion. Keep a watch for signs if an athlete has been hit hard or even jolted for at least two hours after he or she has been taken out of the sport. Even though coaches, umpires and referees are trained in knowing the signs, they can't always see what is happening. A second pair of eyes is always good.

Changes in athlete's behavior, slowed thinking, changes in speech, headaches or pressure in the head, problems with balance or dizziness, and double or blurred vision are all signs of an athlete having a concussion.

After an athlete has been determined by a coach or game official to possibly have a concussion, the athlete should be taken to a medical professional immediately, if needed to the emergency room.

For more information on safety procedures concerning concussions, contact your local schools and non-school sports clubs. For more information on concussions in general visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at: www.cdc.gov.

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