

# Pet-wildlife attacks increase in summer

By Sue Manning, AP

A 1-pound squirrel and 90-pound dog didn't let their size disparity stop them from dueling.

The rodent died in the recent run-in with Kimberlee Jaynes' pet Skip, but the Shar Pei and golden Labrador mix got a long scar on his face and was lucky not to lose an eye.

"Skip has a vendetta now," said Jaynes of Portland. "When he sees them, his ears go up – he's looking for them."

Temperatures are rising, and so are wildlife attacks against pets. Dogs and cats encounter wildlife more often in the summer as people and pets spend more time outdoors and drought and forest fires push wild animals outside their usual territory, veterinarians say. Warmer weather brings out hikers and campers when wildlife is likely to be active and aggressive – often protecting their young broods from perceived threats.

In regions suffering from drought, including the Northwest and California, animals from sea lions to bears must search farther for food, sometimes into populated areas. The dry spell also worsens wildfire season, which can leave habitat scarred and meals even harder to find.

With these challenges, authorities warn against getting too close to wildlife. As visitors flood national parks and other wilderness areas this summer, attacks against people also have ramped up: Several tourists at Yellowstone National Park have been gored or tossed into the air by bison when they crowded the large animals.

After Skip's squirrel encounter, veterinarians at the DoveLewis Emergency Animal Hospital in Portland stitched him up and gave him antibiotics. They also have treated dogs, cats and backyard chickens for attacks by raccoons, coyotes, wild rats and even dive-bombing crows, Erica Loftin said.

Threats can stem from animals that people think are gentle, such as deer, said Gretchen Schoeffler, an emergency and critical care vet at Cornell University Hospital for Animals in Ithaca, N.Y. Almost any wild animal is capable of striking, from beavers and groundhogs to owls and swans, she said.

"Most wildlife, if they feel threatened in any way, they are going to react defensively," Schoeffler said. "And chances are the domestic animal is going to come up on the short end of a stick there, especially if it's a wild animal of any size."

Rabies, usually from bats and foxes, is the biggest risk, though most cities and counties require vaccinations for dogs and cats, veterinarians said. A series of shots can prevent the infection from taking hold in people, but not in pets, Loftin said. If they are exposed, all doctors can do is give a vaccine booster and quarantine them, she said.

Wild animals carry other potentially deadly diseases, including the plague. It's rare but its risk increases in summer as travelers and their pets come into contact with squirrels, mice, prairie dogs or the fleas that feed on infected animals in places such as northern Arizona, Idaho and Colorado, where a teen died of the illness last month.

"Wildlife is wildlife. Appreciate them at a distance," Schoeffler said. "We only do harm when we try to interact with them. If we alleviate their fear of people, that probably won't serve them well in their future."

A few warnings for pet owners:

- Always see a vet if a pet is attacked. There might be

crushed tissue, damage to organs or an infection.

- Watch for signs of infection and go to the vet if swelling, discoloration, discharge from the wound, lethargy or lack of appetite are present.
- Don't wrap a limb. To avoid cutting off blood supply, try a clean cloth compress over the wound.
- A couple of stings from bees, wasps, yellow jackets or hornets probably don't warrant a vet visit unless a dog is allergic or very small. But if the dog has been swarmed, get there as quickly as possible.
- Keep dogs on leashes and in your control.