

# Dogs on the losing end of porcupine encounters

By Kathryn Reed

Dogs and porcupines are not a good combination. Seldom does the dog win.

There have been several reports of dogs with muzzles full of quills in the Truckee marsh area of South Lake Tahoe.

However, area veterinarians say this is normal every summer, even though some residents in the area believe it's more rampant this year.

"It is a technique to get them out. Some people pull them out and that is very painful for the dog," Brenda Daly, veterinarian assistant at Carson Tahoe Veterinary Hospital in Carson City, said of the quills. She said it's best if the dog is sedated for removal of the quills.

Her facility gets emergency cases from the South Shore, Incline Village and other areas around the lake.

"It can be really painful for them," Daly told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It is annoying for them; they paw at the face."



When dogs interact with porcupines it can be painful for the canine. Photo/Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care

Teresa Sullivan, a nurse at Sierra Veterinary Hospital in South Lake Tahoe, said the number of dogs coming in with quills is about the same as most summers, and she's been here for 30 years.

At least a few dogs a month are seen at each of the various vet offices in the region. Early morning and dusk seem to be when most of the encounters occur.

The offices said it can be an expensive procedure to remove the quills. The time involved depends on how many there are and how deep.

"Often dogs that get quilled by porcupines are dogs that it's happened to repeatedly. Either they are not enclosed properly or they are let out early," Sullivan told *Lake Tahoe News*.

El Dorado County Animal Control only gets involved if the dog is a stray.

Cheryl Millham, founder of Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care, said if people would abide by the leash laws or have command of their dogs, there wouldn't be canine-porcupine interactions.

"Their tail is one of their major defense mechanisms. They can swish fast and drive quills real deep," Millham told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She said porcupines are slow and don't attack, but they will defend themselves. Millham added that when people see one, to just give it space and walk by.

Most of the porcupines her animal rehab center has cared for have come from the Tahoe Mountain and Fallen Leaf Lake areas.