WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RACCOON ROUNDWORMS

CLEANING UP A RACCOON LATRINE

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What are raccoon roundworms?

Raccoon roundworms (*Baylisascaris procyonis*) are parasites that live in raccoon intestines. Raccoon roundworms lay many tiny eggs that are found in raccoon droppings. The eggs are not visible to the naked eye. If raccoon droppings are not properly cleaned up, the eggs mature in the droppings and can cause serious illness if accidentally swallowed. Even after raccoon droppings are cleaned up, eggs still may be present.

What is a raccoon latrine?

The sites where raccoons leave their droppings are called *latrines*. Raccoons often use the same latrine over and over. Latrines are usually found at the base of trees, in forks of trees, or on raised areas such as fallen logs, stumps, or large rocks. Raccoon latrines also can be found on or around woodpiles, decks, porches, rooftops, attics, fireplaces, garages, and haylofts.

What do raccoon droppings look like?

Raccoon droppings look like small dog droppings. They are dark in color, smell bad, and often contain undigested seeds or other food items. Because latrines are used repeatedly, there are often older, dry droppings mixed with fresh wet droppings.

Why are raccoon droppings dangerous to humans?

Raccoon droppings are dangerous because many contain tiny roundworm eggs that can infect humans and cause serious illness if accidentally swallowed or inhaled. Although these infections are rare, they can lead to irreversible brain, heart, and sometimes eye damage and death. Most of the infections have occurred in small children between nine months to six years of age since children of this age will put almost anything they find into their mouths.

Can pets, livestock, and wildlife be infected with raccoon roundworms?

Yes. Pets, livestock, and wildlife can be infected with raccoon roundworms, develop similar symptoms, and may die as a result of raccoon roundworm infection.

A key part of preventing this infection is to remove children's access to raccoon droppings.

How do I keep raccoons from making a latrine in my house or on my property?

- Raccoons are wild animals and should not be fed or adopted as pets (it is illegal in California to keep raccoons as pets)
- Discourage raccoons from living in and around your home by removing access to any source of food, including garbage and pet food
- Clear brush so raccoons are not likely to make a den on your property
- Cover children's sandboxes
- Add a low voltage hot wire to the bottom of your fence

Eliminate access to buildings by:

- Cut back branches that overhang the roof
- Repair holes in your home or outbuildings that raccoons could enlarge
- Cover building vents with heavy metal screening
- Install animal-proof chimney caps
- Install skirting around decks and porches

How do I prevent getting raccoon roundworms?

- Do not touch raccoon droppings
- Parents should make sure their children do not eat dirt or play with toys that have come into contact with raccoon droppings when they play outside
- Parents should make sure their children wash their hands after they play outside
- After working or playing outdoors, always wash your hands with soap and water
- It is important to clean up raccoon latrines on your property as soon as they are found because raccoon roundworm eggs take 14 to 28 days to become infective

Report problems with raccoons in your neighborhood to your local animal control agency.

CLEANING UP A RACCOON LATRINE

Bleach and other household disinfectants will NOT kill roundworm eggs. Bleach only loosens the "glue" that holds the eggs in place, making it easier to wash them off a surface.

What items will I need to clean up a raccoon latrine?

Protective clothing

- Disposable rubber or latex gloves
- Disposable or washable coveralls
- Rubber boots
- NIOSH-Approved Disposable Particulate Respirator that has been fit to your face (for cleaning inside a building)

Equipment

- Spray bottle full of water
- Heavy-duty plastic garbage bags
- Shovel
- Sponge, mop, paper towels, disposable wipes
- Bucket of hot, soapy water
- 1-cup bleach added to 1-gallon of boiling water
- Portable propane torch

PLEASE NOTE: Bleach and other household disinfectants will NOT kill roundworm eggs.

How do I clean up an outdoor raccoon latrine?

Before beginning the cleanup, put on the protective clothing listed previously.

1. Lightly mist the latrine area with water to avoid stirring up any dust.
2. Gently shovel or scoop droppings into a heavy-duty garbage bag.
3. If the latrine is on a pile of wood, dispose of the wood.
4. If the latrine is on the ground, remove 2 - 4 inches of soil immediately under the droppings and place in heavy-duty garbage bag.
5. Close bag with a twist tie or tape and then put that bag inside a second bag.
6. Place bag(s) into trash can.
7. Carefully, flame the surface soil with the propane torch, turn soil over with a shovel and reflame several times.
8. Rinse the shovel blade, boots, and other non-disposable clean-up materials with boiling water containing bleach.

DO NOT use leaf blowers to clean raccoon latrines or the debris close to the latrine.

How do I clean up an indoor raccoon latrine?

Wear the protective clothing previously listed.

(Wear the NIOSH-Approved Disposable Particulate Respirator if the latrine is in a small, poorly ventilated space like an attic.)

1. Lightly spray the latrine area with water to avoid stirring up any dust.
2. Gently shovel or scoop droppings into the heavy-duty garbage bag.
3. Use hot, soapy water and a damp sponge, mop, paper towels, and/or disposable wipes to wipe up remaining droppings.
4. Flush dirty water down toilet.
5. Place sponge, mop head and all disposable clean-up materials in plastic bag with droppings.
6. Close bag with a twist tie or tape and then put that bag inside a second bag.
7. Place bag(s) in garbage can.
8. Rinse the shovel blade, boots, and other non-disposable clean-up materials with boiling water containing bleach.

When you are finished cleaning the raccoon latrine:

1. Rinse gloves with hot water and bleach before removing.
2. Wash your skin with soap and warm water.
3. Clean under your fingernails with a brush.
4. Wash your clothes, including rubber boots, separately in hot water with bleach.

For more information:

Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at: http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/baylisascaris/

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