



This picnic table, placed only a few feet from the house, is where the fox recently attacked two children. Seated in the front is 8-year-old Jordan who was bitten numerous times on the hand and leg. With him are his parents, Cindy and Nevin Myer, and brother Josiah, 10.

Suspected Rabid Fox Bites Children

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff

LITITZ (Lancaster Co.) — It was 9:15 on a warm summer evening about two weeks ago. Nevin and Cindy Myer's 8-year-old son Jordan was playing with several friends at a picnic table only a few feet from the back door of their home.

When Jordan felt something furry brush against his legs, he reached down to give his dog a pat on the head.

Instead of a warm nuzzle from his dog, Jordan was bitten, not once but numerous times.

Screaming, Jordan and several of his friends jumped up on the picnic table to escape what they thought at first was a "wild dog."

Instead of a dog, it was a fox, which turned on 4-year-old Jesse Ambrose standing nearby.

The children's screams brought parents on the scene. After pelting the fox with stones and sticks, the adults were able to free their children from the fox's assault.

Although the fox escaped, two children and three adults needed to receive shots to prevent them from contacting rabies.

The series of shots are not as painful as they once were, but are done in a series of 4 or 5 and are expensive.

Nevin said that the shots cost about \$1,000 a person.

"Rabies can be spread just from touching the saliva or cleaning out the wound of a person who was bitten by a rabid animal," he said.

For that reason, three adults in addition to the two children who were bitten needed the shots.

Although medical treatment alleviates humans from developing rabies, it does not counteract the fear caused by the attack.

Cindy said, "I have never seen children as fearful as that night. We immediately prayed that the children would have peace. We are grateful that our sons are dealing well with the experience. But children deal with fear in different ways. Some of the children that were here are waking every night with nightmares."

The Myer home is bordered by

busy highways of Rts. 501 and 322. A Christmas tree farm sets in back of the Myer home.

"We had heard a fox den was found there but we have lived here for 12 years and never saw a fox before that night," Nevin said.

"After that night, the boys were a bit fearful of going outside to play, but I told them to remember the many nice days they had playing outside and weren't bitten instead of the one time the fox came."

The bite marks and scratches on Jordan's arms, hands, and legs are almost healed and he and his 10-year-old brother Josiah are again playing outside.

Jordan said that worse than being bitten himself was seeing the little 4-year-old being bitten.

"He got it worse than I did. I wish that it had only been me and not him too," Jordan said.

According to Richard McGarvey, spokesperson for the Bureau of Health, there have been 355 rabies cases confirmed in the state so far this year. Eighteen have been confirmed in Lancaster County.

These numbers do not include the incident with Jordan and his friends because the fox was never found and diagnosed.

Although it cannot be proved that the fox had rabies, it most likely did because of its strange behavior, authorities agreed.

Ordinarily, wildlife will run away from human contact. McGarvey said, "It's very unusual for a rabid animal to be that aggressive, although it does happen. In most cases, humans approach a fox, skunk or raccoon that is sitting or lying still and are then bitten."

As precautions against being bitten, McGarvey said people should avoid contact with wildlife whenever possible. If they notice wildlife acting strangely, they should immediately contact the Pennsylvania Game Commission or a rodent control company.

Household pets should always be immunized against rabies because they are more prone to come in contact with wildlife.

The amount of reported cases is only slightly higher this year than the past two years.

"But we know there are many more unreported cases and cases that are not confirmed," McGarvey said.

The last known death from rabies in Pennsylvania happened in 1985. A young man died from rabies, but it was never determined how he had contacted the disease.

FFA HAPPENINGS

Lorax

The Envirothon team named the "Lorax" from Middletown High School, Middletown, Md. competed at the National Envirothon during the week of Aug. 1-4.

The competition was held at Harriman State Park, near Rexburg, Idaho.

The "Lorax" placed 6th of 30 teams from the United States and Canada. The winning team hailed from Connecticut.

The "Lorax" team members consisted of Elaine Bucheimer,

Natalie Bucheimer, Crissi Gama-che, Jen Morat, Erin Weber, and alternate Tara Harrell. Ron Albaugh, a science teacher from Middletown High School, was adviser. Barry Burch, the Frederick County Envirothon coordinator at the Catoctin and Frederick soil conservation districts, also assisted with the coaching duties. The Middletown team represented Frederick County and the state of Maryland at the National Envirothon competition.

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