Incident Review #1
A 13-year-old Boy Scout at council camp noticed a large skunk and tried to catch it. When the Scout grabbed the skunk, it bit him on the forearm and would not release. The Scout forcibly removed the skunk, resulting in additional damage to the wound. The bite was treated at camp, and a required Animal Bite Report was filed, as discussed below.

Incident Review #2
On a high-adventure trek, a Boy Scout was bitten on his finger by a chipmunk that found its way onto the inside flap of his pack. His wound was cleaned multiple times. No fever, chills, or discharge were observed. A health care professional was consulted and antibiotics were prescribed.

Incident Review #3
At summer camp, a 14-year-old Boy Scout was trying to catch a mole when it bit his right index finger. An Animal Bite Report was submitted.

Key Points
- If you see or hear a wild animal, always use caution and do not exhibit behaviors that cause the animal to defend itself by biting or scratching. Most animals are afraid of you.
- Wild animals should not be picked up or touched without supervision or permission.
- Keep any food and packs closed, except when in use, to ensure animals are not attracted by food.

Incident Review #4
A 9-year-old Webelos Scout was on a weekend camping trip at a council camp. While he was sleeping in an Adirondack shelter, the Scout was bitten on the shoulder by a bat but did not awaken. He had two puncture wounds and discoloration around the bite marks and was taken to a hospital two days later, where the staff confirmed a bat bite and administered a rabies vaccine.

Key Points
- Bat bites are generally small and not that noticeable, given that bites can occur when the victim is sleeping and unaware of being bitten. Bat bites are the leading cause of rabies in the U.S., although fatalities are rare.
- Cabins, huts, and shelters can offer refuge for creatures; checking out the structure prior to occupying it is recommended, especially before going to sleep.

“Rabies is most commonly transmitted to humans from infected bats, raccoons, foxes, skunks, cattle, wolves, coyotes, dogs, cats, and monkeys.”
— Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
• The required reporting of animal bites in your state supports the assessment of rabies exposure and any indicated treatment. Individuals who are exposed to a rabid or potentially rabid animal often require vaccination.

Discussion Questions

• How would you address a Scout in pursuit of a wild creature? What is the risk associated with this behavior?

• Why are animal bites reported to state, county, or city authorities? What are the risks of failing to report or to get a proper review?

• When Scouts or Scouters are scratched or bitten by a potentially rabid animal, what is an appropriate response?

• Have any of you been bitten by an animal and can you share the story with the group?

Resources

• “Animal and Insect Hazards” and “Incident Reporting” — Guide to Safe Scouting: https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/

• The Sweet Sixteen of BSA Safety: https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/resources/sweet16/

• Safety PAUSE: www.scouting.org/filestore/healthsafety/pdf/680-046.pdf

“ The CDC reports that more than 22,000 people in the U.S. require vaccination each year after being exposed to rabid or potentially rabid animals, and there are about one to two deaths per year. Most rabies-related deaths result from bat bites, which may go unnoticed by the victim and hence untreated.”

— Sources: CDC and Guide to Safe Scouting