



Renfrew County and District Health Unit  
"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

## For Immediate Release

---

(Pembroke, Ontario, May 1, 2026)

### **RCDHU Launches Annual Animal Bite Prevention Campaign**

Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) is kicking off its annual Yellow Ribbon Campaign, aimed at reducing the number of animal bites. This campaign encourages the use of a yellow marker (ribbon, bandana, or bow) tied to a pet's leash or collar to remind people to be cautious and give the animal space. In addition to the potential for injury, animal bites carry a risk of exposure to rabies, often requiring rabies vaccinations for the person who is bitten or a confinement period for the animal involved.

The number of reported animal bites and scratches has been steadily growing in Renfrew County and District; however, animal bites can be prevented. "Although the likelihood of contracting rabies from a domestic animal is low, incidents like these can still be upsetting and disruptive for both the individual involved and the animal's owner," states David Tantalò, Manager of Healthy Environments at RCDHU. "Many bites and scratches are preventable when people recognize the signs that an animal needs space. This campaign is about awareness — if you notice yellow on a pet, it's a signal to give them space." Animals need space for various reasons including age, health issues, nervousness, aggression, or training.

The Yellow Ribbon Campaign is supported by a number of local partners, including pet stores, groomers, veterinarians and animal hospitals, municipalities, OSPCA, and other community organizations. Yellow ribbons are available for pick up at the RCDHU Pembroke office and participating partner locations. For a list of participating locations, visit: [Yellow Ribbon Campaign – Animal Bite Awareness](#).

### **Bite Prevention**

Most animal bites and scratches are preventable. The following tips can help reduce risk and promote safer interactions with animals:

- Always ask the pet owner before petting – never assume an animal is friendly
- Avoid approaching stray, loose, or unfamiliar animals
- Give pets space when they show signs of stress, fear, or discomfort

- Never disturb animals that are sleeping, eating, caring for their young, or showing signs of illness
- Supervise children when around animals, even familiar pets
- Teach children not to pull ears or tails, give hugs, or get close to an animal's face
- Know the signs of changing pet behaviours, like stiffening, raised fur, wide eyes, backing away, baring teeth, or growling
- Keep dogs on a leash while in public unless in designated off-leash dog parks
- Keep your pets healthy and ensure rabies vaccinations are up to date
- If an animal is wearing a yellow ribbon or marker, give them space!

## **Reporting Animal Bites**

If you have been bitten or scratched by an animal, please follow the steps below:

- If possible, collect animal owner/custodian information (name, address and phone number).
- Wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water for at least 15 minutes.
- Seek medical attention (see a health care provider) as soon as possible.
- Call (613-732-3629 ext. 505) and report the incident to [RCDHU](#). If you seek medical attention, they will ask you to complete a [Contact with Suspected Rabid Animal Reporting Form](#), which will be sent to RCDHU for follow-up. Public health inspectors investigate all animal bites and scratches to prevent and control the transmission of rabies.

Stay connected on social media by following [@RCDHealthUnit](#) for campaign-related messaging and bite prevention tips. To learn more about the Yellow Ribbon Campaign and animal bite prevention, contact RCDHU at 1-800-267-1097 or visit: [Yellow Ribbon Campaign – Animal Bite Awareness](#).