

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT NEWS

RABIES AND YOUR PETS



What is Rabies?

Rabies is caused by the *Lyssavirus rabies* virus. Rabies transmission can occur by exposure to an infected animal's saliva.

Course of the Disease.

Following the bite:

- The virus slowly moves through the muscle and into the nervous tissue. In the nervous tissue it is hidden from the immune system.
- It can take up to a year for the virus to enter the brain, but averages three to eight weeks.

Stage 1: (The first two to three days after symptoms have started)

- Animal's personality changes.
- Their larynx begins to spasm.

Stage 2: (Next one or two days)

- This is the "mad dog" phase.
- The animal has no fear and will attack cage bars.

Stage 3: (Next two to four days)

- The larynx is paralyzed, resulting in an inability to swallow.
- Excessive drooling and "foaming at the mouth" will be apparent.
- The virus will be present in body secretions.
- Death occurs when the breathing muscles are paralyzed.

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/13848-rabies>

Signs of Rabies in Wild Animals.

- Wild animals may not appear shy or afraid of people.
- Nocturnal animals are out during the day.
- Bats make unusual noises or have difficulty flying.
- Animals bite without being provoked.
- Animals are weak or agitated and vicious.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/RabiesBrochure.pdf>

Rabies in the U.S. (2022)

- Bats – 1,218
- Racoons – 1,014
- Skunks – 660
- Foxes – 269
- Cats – 222
- Dogs – 50
- Cattle – 42

<https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/mcm-world-rabies-day-infographic-792x1224-2024.pdf>

WORLD RABIES DAY

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025

Rabies Worldwide:

Over 99% of human rabies cases are attributed to bites from infected dogs, particularly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

https://www.who.int/health-topics/rabies#tab=tab_1

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Rabies Prevention:

- Never approach animals who appear injured or sick, especially if you see nocturnal animals during the daytime.
- Keep your pets up to date on rabies vaccinations.

<https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/prevention/index.html>

What you should do if you have been scratched or bitten by a wild animal or unfamiliar animal:

- Wash any wounds immediately with soap and water for 15 minutes.
- Talk with a healthcare provider, explaining what happened.
- If the animal is a pet, request proof of vaccination.

<https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/prevention/index.html>

Signs of rabies in bats:

- Are active during the day.
- Are found in unusual places (inside a home or on the ground.)
- Are unable to fly or you can easily approach.
- Have contacted you as they usually avoid humans.

<https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/prevention/bats.html>

What to do if you encounter a bat:

- Avoid touching bats.
- Bat bites can be tiny, and you may not even know if you were bitten.
- If you know that you were bitten or scratched by a bat, wash the wound with soap and water, and get medical help right away.

<https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/prevention/bats.html>



What if my pet is gets bitten?

- Consult with your veterinarian about the best
- If the pet is vaccinated against rabies it will need to be quarantined for at least 60 days.
- If the pet has not been vaccinated against rabies it will need to be quarantined for 180 days.

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/one-health/rabies>

Good News:

- Awareness of rabies disease engages communities and empowers people to save themselves by seeking care they need.
- Appropriate wound management and prompt access to medical treatment is almost 100% effective in preventing human rabies deaths.
- Vaccination of pets, especially dogs is a proven cost-effective way to save human lives.



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