

What constitutes a RABIES exposure?

Local Rabies Contact:

- *Regardless of vaccination status, healthy dogs, cats and ferrets that bite a person should be confined and observed for 10 days. If the animal dies or is euthanized within that 10 day window, it should be tested.*

Exposure is defined as any situation where saliva or central nervous system tissue of a suspect rabid animal enters an open, fresh wound or comes in contact with a mucus membrane by entering the eye, nose or mouth. The most efficient route of exposure is a bite. Dogs, cats and ferrets that bite people should be considered suspect rabid until the end of the 10 day observation period.

Bat exposures are evaluated differently. Anyone who has had direct contact with a bat and cannot rule out a bite or has been in a room with a bat and is unable to tell whether an exposure took place (e.g. infant, cognitively impaired or sleeping adult) should be considered potentially exposed to rabies.

Report animal bites to your local health department!

Wild, carnivorous mammals are a higher risk for spreading rabies. The animals most often diagnosed with rabies in VA are raccoons, skunks, and foxes.

In VA, opossums, beavers, and groundhogs are also considered to be high risk.

Low risk animals include rodents and rabbits.