

BITES AND YOUR PET

If your pet bites someone:

1. Report the bite to your local health department or animal protection office. If your pet is a dog, cat, or ferret you will probably be asked to confine the animal and watch it closely for 10 days.
2. Tell the person who was bitten to wash their wound thoroughly and seek medical attention right away.
3. Check with your veterinarian to see if your pet's vaccinations are up-to-date.
4. Don't let your pet roam off of your property and don't give your animal away. It must be available for observation by local authorities.
5. Do not euthanize ('put your pet to sleep') unless you have been instructed to do so by public health authorities.
6. After the recommended observation period, have your pet vaccinated for rabies if it does not have a current rabies vaccination.

If you think your pet has been exposed to rabies:

1. **Follow the instructions** in the "If You Are Bitten" section of this brochure for capturing or identifying the animal that might have exposed your pet.
2. **Contact your local health department** or animal protection office for further instructions.
3. **Call your veterinarian** for advice about wound care and to check on your pet's vaccination status.

**DOMESTIC ANIMALS
CAN GET INFECTED WITH
RABIES DUE TO CONTACT
WITH WILD ANIMALS.**



WHAT YOU CAN DO!



Vaccinate your dogs and cats against rabies and ask your veterinarian about rabies vaccines for other animals you own. Protecting animals from rabies protects both them and the people around them. Virginia law requires dogs and cats to be vaccinated for rabies.



if your pet is attacked or bitten by a wild animal, **report** this to your local health department or animal protection authorities.



Restrict your animals to your property. Don't let pets roam free. To help decrease stray and wild animals being attracted to your home, keep garbage securely covered and pet food inside.



Never keep wild animals as pets. Do not approach stray domestic animals or wild animals.

- ▶ If you think a wild animal needs help, call the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for guidance (www.dwr.virginia.gov).
- ▶ Stray domestic animals, especially if they appear ill or injured, should be brought to the attention of local animal protection authorities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

contact your local health department
or visit: www.vdh.virginia.gov/animal-contact-human-health/rabies-control/

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VDH VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH



RABIES & ANIMAL BITES



RABIES - THE FACTS

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. It is almost always fatal, unless preventive treatment is administered **before symptoms develop. It's important to seek medical attention promptly after being exposed!**

The rabies virus is in the saliva and the brain of rabid animals. It can be transmitted through a bite or by getting saliva or brain tissue in the eyes, nose, mouth or in an open wound. Rabies cannot be transmitted by blood, feces, urine or by just petting an animal.

A rabies-infected animal may act normal. You cannot tell if an animal has rabies just by looking at it!

Only mammals get rabies; birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians, like frogs, do not. Wild animals commonly diagnosed with rabies are raccoons, skunks, and foxes. Cats are the most common domestic animal diagnosed with rabies. Rabbits and rodents (like squirrels, rats, and mice) seldom get rabies.

Rabies can be prevented in cats, dogs, ferrets and some livestock with rabies vaccination. Even if an oral rabies vaccine is being used as part of a wildlife rabies control program in your area, you should still get your pets vaccinated for rabies and keep their vaccinations up-to-date.

BITES ARE THE MOST COMMON WAY RABIES SPREADS!



SPECIAL CARE AROUND BATS

While bats play a key role in the environment, most recent human rabies cases in the U.S. have been caused by bats. To avoid bites, avoid direct contact with bats, especially any bat that is active by day or is unable to fly.

People can be exposed to rabies by bats without knowing they were bitten. Seek medical advice even in the absence of an obvious bite wound if you find a bat in a room with a:

- Sleeping person
- Unattended, small child
- Someone mentally or physically challenged
- Intoxicated person

Bats that may have exposed people or animals to rabies should be collected safely for possible testing (or at least not released). Bats may be contained in a room by closing windows and door(s). Use caution if you try to capture a bat yourself by wearing gloves and using a container (like a coffee can or a box) to place over the bat and then sliding and securing a piece of cardboard between the container and the bat. Call your local health department for advice about testing and medical care. A local health department directory can be found at vdh.virginia.gov/local-health-districts/

RABIES KILLS, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WORLDWIDE EACH YEAR!

IF YOU ARE BITTEN

Don't panic...but don't ignore the bite either. To decrease the chance of infection, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and lots of water. Give first aid as you would for any wound.

If it can be done safely, capture or confine the animal that bit you, or at least identify it before it runs away. Don't try to pick the animal up. If the animal is owned, get the name and contact information for the owner. Call your **local health department or animal protection office** for further instructions.

Don't damage the head of any animal that might need to be tested for rabies. The brain will be needed for the test.

Notify your doctor promptly and explain how you were bitten. Tell your doctor whether or not the bite has been reported to local authorities. Your doctor might want to call the health department to discuss whether or not you need to start the rabies vaccine series and will help address other concerns about the bite. Rabies treatment no longer involves injections in the abdomen and most are given in the arm.



REPORT THE BITE TO YOUR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT.