

RABIES

What is it?

Rabies is a disease caused by a virus (which attacks the central nervous system) that mainly affects carnivores (i.e. skunk, raccoon, fox, coyote, etc.) and insectivorous bats. It can, however, affect any mammal.

What are the most common carriers in the United States?

Raccoons and skunks.

How is the disease transmitted?

It is almost always transmitted by the bite of a rabid animal (through the saliva), but it can be transmitted by contact with infected saliva in an open wound or by ingestion.

What signs would you see in a rabid animal?

Signs vary greatly—usually you will see behavioral changes (such as loss of appetite, nervousness, irritability, hyperexcitability, and in wildlife you may see loss of fear towards humans). Another somewhat common sign is unexplained paralysis.

How fast will you see signs of the disease after a bite by a rabid animal?

The time between being bitten and seeing signs of the disease varies greatly. In dogs it is usually about 21-80 days post-exposure. In people it has taken as long as 7 years.

What is the treatment for rabies?

There is no treatment for rabies once signs have developed. The disease is almost always fatal.

How soon after the onset of clinical signs will an animal/person die?

Usually within 10 days.

How can it be determined if an animal has rabies?

The best way is to use a special test on the brain of the animal (which means that the animal must first be euthanized).

How can the spread of rabies be controlled?

All animals that can be vaccinated for rabies (i.e. dogs, cats, and ferrets) should be vaccinated. Stray animals and wildlife should be controlled.

What if my pet is bitten by an animal that may be rabid?

If unvaccinated for rabies, the pet will either be euthanized or put in isolation for 6 months.

If vaccinated for rabies, the pet should be revaccinated immediately and closely observed for 45 days.

What if I am bit?

The wound should be washed thoroughly immediately, you should contact your physician and animal control.

If you were bit by a wild animal or a stray animal, it would be euthanized and tested for rabies.

If you were bit by a healthy vaccinated dog, it would be isolated for 10 days.

If you were bit by a healthy unvaccinated dog, it would either be euthanized or put in isolation for 10 days.

If the suspect animal developed signs of rabies during the 10 days in isolation, it would be euthanized.