

If Your Pet Has Bitten Someone

- Tell the person bitten to see a doctor immediately and to follow the advice on the previous pages. Report the bite to the local health department. 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. Report any illness or unusual behavior to your local health department and veterinarian immediately.



- Don't let your pet stray and don't give the animal away. It must be available for observation by public health authorities.
- Don't kill your pet or allow it to be killed unless you have been instructed to do so by the public health authorities.
- **AFTER** the recommended observation period, have your pet vaccinated for rabies if it does not have a current rabies vaccination.

What You Can Do to Help Control Rabies

- Have your veterinarian vaccinate your dogs, cats, ferrets and selected livestock. Keep the vaccinations up-to-date.
- If your pet is attacked or bitten by a wild animal, report it to the local health department or animal control authorities. Be sure your vaccinated dog, cat or ferret receives a booster vaccination.
- Limit the possibility of rabies exposure by keeping your animals on your property. Don't let pets roam free. Also, don't leave garbage or pet food outside. It may attract wild or stray animals.
- Remember...wild animals should not be kept as pets.

For more information contact your local health department or visit:
www.vdh.virginia.gov/Epidemiology/DEE/Rabies



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Rabies and Animal Bites



What You Should Know and What You Should Do



Facts About Rabies

- Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. It kills almost any mammal or human that gets sick from it.



- 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.
- Only mammals get rabies; birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians do not. Wild animals frequently diagnosed with rabies are raccoons, skunks and foxes. Cats are the most common domestic animal diagnosed with rabies. Rabbits, squirrels, rats and mice and small pets like gerbils and hamsters seldom get it.
- Rabies can be prevented in cats, dogs, ferrets and some livestock with rabies vaccination. For most wild and exotic animals, there are no rabies vaccines available that have been shown to protect them.
- There is an oral wildlife rabies vaccine that can be used by localities with the approval of state authorities. The use of an oral rabies vaccine in an area may decrease the number of rabid animals, but will not eliminate the need for vaccination of pets or other domestic animals.

Rabies and Humans

- Because of improved rabies vaccination programs for pets and better treatment for people who are bitten, rabies cases among humans in this country are rare. The best way to prevent the spread of rabies to humans is by keeping pets properly vaccinated.

Bats and Rabies

- Most of the recent human rabies cases in the United States have been caused by rabies virus from bats, therefore, it is best not to handle bats, especially any bat that is active by day or is unable to fly.



- Most people know when they have been bitten by a bat, but there are situations in which you should seek medical advice even in the absence of an obvious bite wound. For example, if you wake up to find a bat in your room, see a bat in the room of an unattended child, or see a bat near a mentally impaired or intoxicated person, do not destroy or discard the bat. Call your local health department for advice on how to have the bat tested and whether anyone needs medical care.

If You've Been Bitten

- **Don't panic...**but don't ignore the bite either. Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and lots of water. Washing thoroughly will greatly lessen the chance of infection. Give first aid as you would for any wound.
- If possible, capture the animal under a large box or can, or at least identify it before it runs away. Don't try to pick the animal up. Call an animal control or law enforcement officer to come get it.
- Don't damage the head of any animal that might need to be tested for rabies. The brain will be needed for the test. Animals should not be destroyed at random just because there may be a rabies outbreak in your area.
- Notify your doctor immediately and explain how you got the bite. Your doctor will want to know if the animal has been captured and may want to contact the health department to talk about whether or not you need to start the rabies vaccine series. Your doctor will also treat you for other possible infections that could be caused from the bite.
- **Report the bite to the local health department.**

