

Rabies

What is it?

Rabies is a disease that is caused by a virus. Rabies can be prevented by giving pets a vaccine. The disease is mostly found among wild animals. It can be passed to pets and humans through contact with an animal with rabies. Raccoons and bats are the most common wild animals with rabies in Western North Carolina.

How is it spread?

The rabies virus is passed through the saliva of an infected animal, most often through biting or licking.

What are the symptoms in animals?

Some animals may show no symptoms at all. Others may have all of these symptoms:

- Unusually aggressive behavior (attacking, biting)
- Increased drooling
- Stumbling or falling
- Refusing to eat
- Moving slowly or appearing paralyzed
- Wild animal may lose fear of people

How Can I Protect Myself?

- Keep your pets and horses up to date on rabies vaccinations.
- Call animal control to have any **sick, injured, or aggressive wild animal removed. Animal control does not remove healthy stray or wild animals.**
- If you find a bat in your home, close it up in the room and call animal control to remove it.
- Do not feed, handle or adopt wild animals including wild or feral cats (at home or abroad).
- Teach children to avoid contact with animals they do not know.

What if my pet or I am exposed to a rabid animal (bitten or in contact with saliva)?

- If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, do not touch it as you may expose yourself to rabies. Contain your animal outside of your home. Any contact with wet saliva is a potential exposure. Call animal control immediately.
- If you are bitten or think you may have come in contact with a rabid animal:
 - Wash your hands and the bitten area with soap and water.
 - Call your doctor or the Department of Health right away! There is a vaccine that must be given soon to protect you from getting rabies.
 - Call animal control to remove the animal.
- If a bat is discovered in a room with anyone who is sleeping, or a child, a person with mental disabilities or anyone who is impaired:
 - Seek medical care for them right away to be sure they have not been exposed to a bat with rabies. It is hard to see a bite from a bat and it is rare to feel the bite.
 - Call animal control to remove the bat.

What else is important to know?

- There is a vaccine that can help prevent humans from getting rabies. **But it should be given, as soon as possible, after being exposed to an animal with rabies.** You cannot wait to see if symptoms appear because then it is too late for treatment and survival is rare.
- Call your doctor right away if you or someone you know might have been exposed to an animal with rabies.

Learn more at www.cdc.gov/rabies

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For more information

Disease Control Program ~ 828.250.5109

Located at 40 Coxe Ave, downtown Asheville, NC 28801



buncombecounty.org/hhs