



## Rabies

**What is it?** Rabies is a preventable disease that is caused by a virus. The disease is usually found among wild animals; however it can be passed to pets and humans. Raccoons and bats are the most common carriers of 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 vicious
- Increased drooling
- Stumble or fall
- Refuse 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 remove any stray or wild animals from your neighborhood. Do not try to remove or handle them yourself!
- If you find a bat in your home, secure the room and call animal control to remove it.
- Secure your home and other occupied spaces to prevent bats from entering.
- Do not feed, handle or adopt wild animals.
- Teach children not to handle wild animals and to avoid contact with animals they don't know.
- If you are traveling abroad, avoid wild animals and dogs.

### What if my pet or I am bitten?

- If your pet is bitten by a wild animal,
  - take pet to a veterinarian for care right away.
  - call animal control to search for wild animal.

- If you are bitten or think you may have come in contact with a rabid animal,
  - wash your hands and affected areas immediately with soap and water,
  - call your doctor or the Department of Health right away!
  - call animal control to remove the animal.
- If a child, a mentally disabled person or an intoxicated person is found in a room with a bat,
  - seek medical care for them right away to be sure they have not been exposed to rabies.
  - call animal control to remove the animal.
- Do not handle the pet or let it lick you. If you do come into contact with it, wash the affected areas right away with soap and water.

### What else is important to know?

- Once symptoms of rabies appear, a person rarely survives.
- If you suspect that you have been in contact with a rabid animal, call your doctor right away!
- There is a vaccine available to help prevent humans from getting rabies. It should be given as soon as possible after an exposure to a rabid animal. Your doctor can help you decide if you need the vaccine.
- Bites from bats can be very small and hard to see. Let animal control remove a bat from your home and test it for rabies.

### For more information about rabies:

- [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies)

Buncombe County Department of Health  
Disease Control – 250-5109 5/12

