

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

To learn about low cost rabies vaccination clinics in the area:

<http://www.ashevillehumane.org/resources/low-cost-vaccine-clinics>

Buncombe County Health and Human Services -
Disease Control

Public Health

53 S. French Broad Avenue, Asheville, NC 28801 ~
828.250.5000

