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rabies

AND YOUR PET

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What is Rabies?

Rabies is an infectious and contagious disease caused by a virus which affects the nervous system of *all warm-blooded animals* including *man*. It has been known in the world for many years and is referred to in writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

How is Rabies spread?

Rabies is usually spread by the bite of an infected animal. Infection can occur if the saliva of an infected animal enters an open cut or wound. The biting animals, such as the skunk, fox, wolf, coyote, dog and cat, are the most active spreaders of the disease.

How long does Rabies take to develop?

Symptoms of rabies usually appear 3 to 6 weeks after a cat or dog has been bitten. In the dog, however, they may not develop for up to 6 months. The length of time between infection and the onset of symptoms depends on the severity of the bite or wounds, and their distance from the brain.

How does a Rabid animal act?

There are two forms of rabies: *Furious Rabies* and *Dumb Rabies*. In dogs, dumb rabies is more common. Cats nearly always suffer from the furious form. Livestock usually have dumb rabies. The symptoms described below are characteristic of the different forms, but a rabid animal will not necessarily exhibit all of them.

FURIOUS RABIES

In the dog, the first symptom noticed is usually a change in its disposition. A normally friendly dog may become shy, hide in dark places, resent attention and snap when bothered. A normally shy or snarly dog may become unusually friendly. During this stage, a dog's voice becomes hoarse and its appetite diminished or perverted; it will eat sticks, stones or rubber.

Soon after this, the dog becomes very nervous and excitable. The expression of its eyes and face is a combination of alertness, fear and ferocity. This has been described as a *fox-like* expression. During this stage, the dog may travel several miles, trotting along with its head and tail down, drooling saliva, and biting at anything and everything it meets. A dog that is tied or shut up will often chew at its chain or the bars of its cage, injuring teeth and mouth so that blood appears in its saliva. This period may last several days, and the dog will become thin because it is not eating.

In the third or paralytic stage the dog staggers; is soon unable to get up; and eventually becomes completely paralysed. Death follows unconsciousness or a violent convulsion, about 4 to 7 days after symptoms first appear.

In the cat, the symptoms are much the same as in the dog. It becomes restless and moves about persistently in an erratic manner. It will not wander as far as a dog. Muscle spasms occur and are often brought on by sudden noise or excitement. During these spasms, the cat will jump about furiously and attack other animals and man.

DUMB RABIES

In this form, the period of excitability and viciousness is either absent or very short and often goes unnoticed. Paralysis usually starts in the throat, so that the animal is unable to bite or swallow, and saliva drools from its partly open mouth; it may appear as if it had a piece of bone stuck in its throat. It rapidly loses weight; paralysis develops quickly; and the animal dies shortly afterwards.



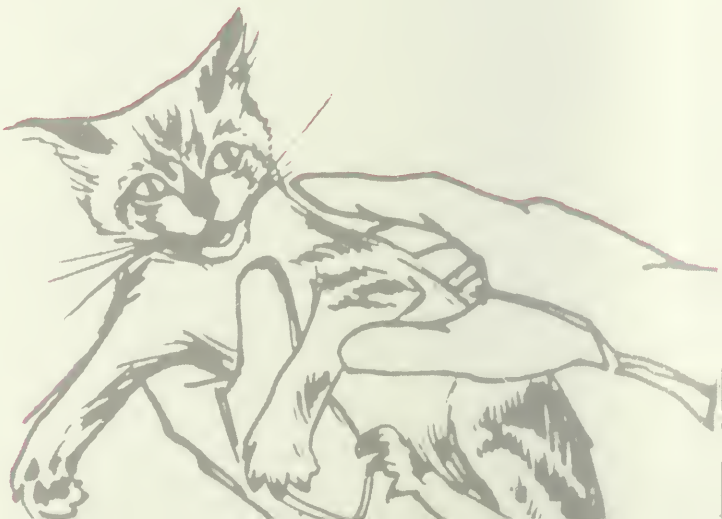
How to prevent Rabies in man

Call a doctor immediately a person is bitten by any animal. If a doctor is not available, thoroughly scrub all wounds to their full depth for 15 to 20 minutes, using a strong soap and changing the wash water frequently. Then apply an antiseptic.

Wear heavy gloves if you have to handle a suspect animal, an animal that has just been bitten, or one that has been in a fight with a suspect animal. Also put on gloves before touching any object a suspect animal has had in its mouth or may have drooled on.

Never put your fingers or hands in the mouth of an animal that appears to be choking. You could expose yourself to infection if there are cuts or scratches on your hands.

Do not touch with bare hands wild animals which appear to be sick or excessively tame, or pets you do not know. Squirrels, chipmunks, gophers and bats often bite children when they try to pick them up.



How to protect your pets

In areas where rabies exists, have your dogs and cats vaccinated against rabies every year. This will protect most of them, although a small percentage may not receive full protection from vaccination.

For other pets, such as rabbits, raccoons and hamsters, consult your veterinarian. Some rabies vaccines can be used safely only on certain animals.

When rabies is in your area, do not let your dog or cat run loose. All stray animals should be disposed of humanely.

As the reservoir of infection is wildlife, especially foxes and skunks, the population of these animals should be controlled.

What to do if you suspect an animal has Rabies

Notify the Health of Animals Branch of the Canada Department of Agriculture as quickly as possible. If you are unable to contact their office at the address given below, notify your local veterinarian or police. Rabies is a reportable disease under federal law.

When a person is bitten by a dog or other pet animal, make every effort to capture and confine the suspect rabid animal. It should not be killed unless absolutely necessary to prevent its escape, or unless it presents a danger to human health.

When an animal is bitten, it should be confined away from people and other animals. Every effort should be made to capture the biting animal in order to determine definitely whether or not it is rabid.

*If it is necessary to kill the animal to prevent its escape, as would be the case with wild animals, do **not** shoot it in the head, as the brain must be preserved undamaged for laboratory examination. Precautions should be taken to prevent people or other animals from coming in contact with the carcass or blood from the killed animal.*

*To **diagnose rabies** the head (brain) of a suspect animal must be sent to a federal laboratory by a veterinarian of the Canada Department of Agriculture. There is no other way to test for rabies.*

How can Rabies be treated?

There is no treatment for rabies in animals and the disease is always fatal. The thing to do is to **guard against rabies**.

To report a suspected case of rabies, or for further information, please contact the Health of Animals Branch Veterinarian for this area.



DISTRICT VETERINARIAN BRANCH OFFICES

HEALTH OF ANIMALS BRANCH

<i>British Columbia</i>	Room 801 1001 West Pender Street Vancouver, B.C. V6E 2M7
<i>Alberta</i>	Government of Canada Bldg. # 750, 220 – 4th Avenue S.E. Calgary, Alta. T2P 3C3
<i>Saskatchewan</i>	Room 400, Federal Building 1975 Scarth Street Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 2H3
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<i>Ontario</i>	4900 Yonge Street Suite 1210 Willowdale, Ontario M2N 6G7
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<i>Atlantic Provinces</i>	Terminal Plaza Building 1222 Main Street P.O. Box 338 Moncton, N.B. E1C 8L4

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