

RABIES

It's not worth the risk



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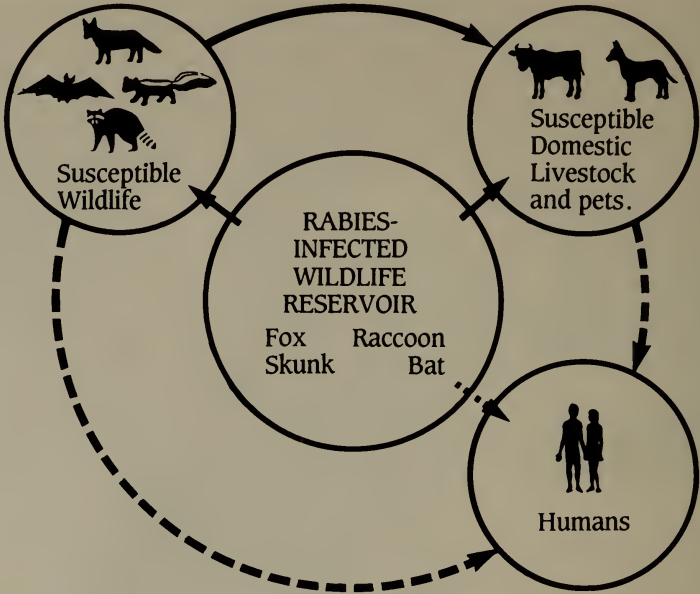
Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

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Canada

Rabies threatens us all. Almost always fatal, it can infect humans as well as domestic animals and wildlife.

Rabies is a viral disease of warm-blooded animals. Although usually communicated by the bite of an infected animal, it may occur if the animal's saliva enters an open cut or wound. The virus then invades the nervous system and travels to the brain.



How can you get it?

Most of Canada's rabies is carried by wildlife. This makes control difficult and eradication almost impossible. Foxes, skunks, bats and raccoons are the main carriers and pose a continuing threat because they often live close to people. If they infect your farm animals or pets, they may endanger you.



Foxes normally avoid porcupines; suspect any fox with porcupine quills in its mouth.

However, don't become alarmed every time you see a wild animal. To help control rabies:

- learn how to recognize a rabid animal;
- know what to do when you suspect an animal has rabies;
- know what to do if you think you, someone else or your animal has encountered a rabid animal; and
- learn how to prevent rabies in your area.

How long does rabies take to develop?

It may take 2 weeks to 6 months for symptoms to appear after contact with a rabid animal. The time depends largely on the severity of the bite and the amount of the virus in the injected saliva.

How to recognize a rabid animal

Animals do not all behave the same way when they have rabies. The signs described below are characteristic, but a rabid animal may not exhibit all of them, or to the same degree. The disease may take different forms, "furious" or "dumb" rabies, or a combination of the two.



Furious rabies In the early stages, the animal changes its disposition or behavior (a friendly animal may become shy and hide in a corner, a shy animal may become snappy, uncertain or unusually friendly, and a wild animal may become abnormally tame). It may bite indiscriminately – its chain, other animals, people, its owner, itself, etc. Its voice may become hoarse.

In the later stages, the animal may become unusually restless and excitable. It may startle easily, run aimlessly, become watchful and exhibit a puzzled or apprehensive look. It might change its eating habits, and finally develop gradual paralysis in the throat (drooling profusely) and hindlegs. Eventually, it dies.

Dumb rabies Vicious and aggressive signs are less noticeable, but otherwise the course of the disease is similar. Rabies may invade the nervous system faster in this form. Paralysis usually starts in the throat, causing difficulty in swallowing. The animal rapidly loses weight, becomes paralyzed and dies.

Identifying rabies in livestock

Identification may be difficult because many animals do not exhibit only dumb or furious signs but a combination of the two.

Cattle bellow loudly and their hind fetlocks knuckle. Dairy cattle suffer a sudden drop in milk production.



Horses show extreme agitation, inflicting severe wounds on themselves. They sometimes appear to have a throat obstruction.

Sheep become very quarrelsome, develop a strong desire to lick inanimate objects, and bleat loudly.

Pigs lose their coordination, shake their heads continuously, and champ their jaws.

If you suspect an animal has been exposed...

If you think one of your animals may be rabid, be extremely careful; avoid contact with the animal. Consider whether it has been vaccinated within the past year. Has it contacted wildlife during the last month? Do you live in a high-risk area, such as Ontario?

Tie the animal up and isolate it from other animals and humans until you receive further instructions from your district veterinarian.



Remember that, by law, you must report the disease. Notify the following people immediately:

- your district veterinarian or local office of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Food Production and Inspection Branch (listed in the telephone directory under Government of Canada)
- your local veterinarian
- local police

If you suspect a person has been exposed...

When someone is exposed to rabies through contact with wild animals, livestock and pets medical authorities recommend that you:

- flush the wound or exposed surface immediately with soap and water;
- remove any clothing that may be contaminated and wash it promptly;
- notify you local medical officer of health; and
- consult your doctor.



How Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada fights rabies

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's control program focuses on preventing the spread of rabies by:

- investigating all reported suspect cases in animals;
- diagnosing suspected cases;
- reducing contact through animal quarantine;
- supporting mass immunization clinics for dogs and cats when there are potential high-risk situations;
- requiring rabies certification for all dogs and cats over 3 months that enter Canada;
- improving diagnostic techniques; and
- cooperating in research to predict outbreaks and develop an oral vaccine for wildlife.

Indemnity

Under an agreement between the federal government, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec, you may be compensated for domestic livestock lost through rabies. This does not include pets. Necessary confirmation may be by laboratory or clinical examination (the latter by a veterinarian who has examined or seen the animal before it died.)



How you can help

Our rabies control program has been effective. In the last 20 years, only three Canadians have died of this disease. However, rabies remains a serious problem with ten to twelve thousand suspected cases in animals reported each year. We need your help.

- Have your veterinarian vaccinate your pet regularly.
- Leash your pet and don't go near strays.
- Warn your children to stay away from "friendly" wild animals.



- When camping, hunting or hiking, remember that you might come across a rabid animal.
- Keep a healthy distance from wildlife.
- Report all animal bites and unusual behavior (including bats) to your local or district veterinarian.

When travelling with your pet, follow all of the above guidelines. If you take it to another country, you will need a current rabies certificate from your veterinarian.

People working in occupations that bring them in regular contact with animals (such as veterinarians, trappers and park rangers) should protect themselves through pre-exposure vaccinations. Today's vaccines are much improved over the old methods of prevention and treatment.

With your cooperation, we may get rabies under control in Canada or, perhaps, eliminate it.



For more information contact your national animal health veterinarians at the following regional offices:

Province	Address	Telephone
ALTA, NWT, BAFFIN ISLAND	Harry Hayes Bldg. Room 654-220-4th Ave. S.E. Calgary, Alberta T2G 4X3	Ph.(403) 292-5717
ATLANTIC PROVINCES	5th Floor 1081 Main Street P.O. Box 6088 Moncton, New Brunswick E1C 8R2	Ph. (506) 851-7652
B.C. AND THE YUKON	Suite 202 620 Royal Ave. P.O. Box 2523 New Westminster, British Columbia V3L 5A8	Ph. (604) 666-2847
MANITOBA	Room 613 269 Main Street Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 1B2	Ph. (204) 983-4744
ONTARIO	174 Stone Rd. West Guelph, Ontario N1G 4S9	Ph. (519) 837-9400
QUEBEC	2001 University 7th Floor Montreal, Quebec H3A 3N2	Ph. (514) 283-8888

YOUR DISTRICT VETERINARIAN IS:

CAL/BCA OTTAWA K1A 0C5



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