

AUGUST IS RABIES AWARENESS MONTH

What Is Rabies?

Rabies is a disease that affects the brain. It is caused by a virus which is the result of an exposure to an animal with rabies. Rabies is ALWAYS fatal in humans. This is why it is very important to contact your physician and the Scott County Humane Society if you have been exposed.

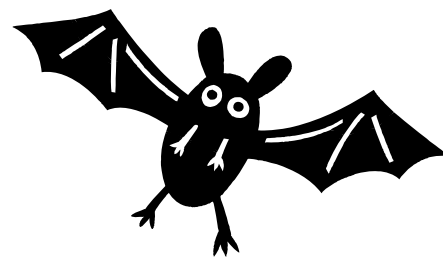


In 2006, there were 57 reported animal cases of rabies in Iowa. The last human case reported in Iowa occurred in 2002. Worldwide, an estimated 35,000 to 40,000 human deaths occur each year, with most occurring in developing countries. In 2006, there were 56 people who were exposed to animals that might have had rabies in Scott County. The Scott County Health Department helped decide if rabies shots should be given to these people. Nineteen animals were tested for rabies and none had it.

How Can Someone Be Exposed To Rabies?

There are two types of exposure:

1. Bite—any breaking of the skin by teeth
2. Non-bite exposure—saliva or brain tissue from an animal with rabies gets into any of the following: wound, open skin, eyes, nose, or mouth



Another way someone may get rabies is through a “possible exposure.” This is when you are not sure if you or your children have been bitten. For example, bats have small teeth and it may leave marks that are not easily seen. So, if you wake up and find a bat in your room, be sure to seek medical attention and get the bat tested for rabies.

How Can You Protect Yourself From Rabies?

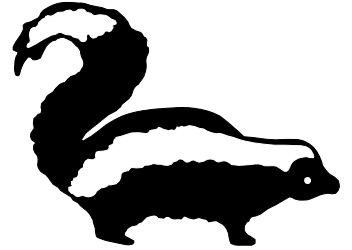
Follow these tips to protect yourself from rabies:

- Vaccinate your pets.
- Stay away from wild or stray animals.
- Do not touch or handle dead animals.
- Keep garbage cans covered or in a protected place so that wild animals will not be attracted.
- Never handle bats.
- Be alert for animals that are acting sick or strange.
- Teach your children to avoid unfamiliar animals and to tell you if they have been bitten or scratched by any animal.



Which Animals Usually Get Rabies?

Animals that are wild and meat-eating are the most likely to have rabies. This could include skunks, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, and bobcats. Also, bats are more likely to be rabid. Pets or farm animals such as dogs, cats, cattle, or horses can pass rabies on to people as well. Rabbits and rodents rarely get rabies.



Protection For Pets

Vaccination is the key for prevention of rabies in pets. Dogs are required by law to be vaccinated. Cat and livestock vaccinations are encouraged, but are not required by law. Be sure that your pet's rabies vaccination is up-to-date and always have your pet wear its rabies tag so that others will know that your pet has been vaccinated. Keep your pet away from wild or stray animals.

Symptoms Of Rabies In An Animal

Animals with rabies can either be easily over-excited or angered or can be calm and have difficulty moving. An animal with rabies may eat strange things and have a hard time swallowing which can result in drooling. Some animals with rabies show no symptoms at all.

What To Do If You Are Bitten Or Scratched By An Animal

Following any bite or scratch by an animal, it is important to immediately wash the area with soap and water. We recommend that you report the animal bite to the Scott County Humane Society Animal Control and then immediately contact your physician to discuss your risk of rabies exposure. If it is a bat exposure, do not let the bat go and contact Animal Control to pick it up.



What Will Your Doctor Do?

Your doctor will work with you to determine your level of exposure and whether or not treatment will be needed. Your doctor will use tools and resources available through the Scott County Health Department and the Iowa Department of Public Health to help make this decision. It is important to contact your physician soon after you are exposed.

How Do You Know If An Animal Has Rabies?

The only way to tell for sure if an animal has rabies is to have a professional test its brain for rabies after it is dead. Rabies is not as common in dogs, cats, and ferrets in the U.S. If one of these animals appears healthy at the time of the bite, it should be separated from people and animals and observed by its owner for ten days. If the animal becomes sick during this time, the person exposed should receive treatment. If the animal is not available for testing or observation, it should be assumed the animal has rabies and the person exposed to this animal should get treated.

RESOURCES:

Iowa Department of Public Health:

<http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/rabies.asp>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/>

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