



## Take a Bite Out of Rabies

You are on your evening walk and you see a small raccoon stuck in a fence. Your first instinct is to help the trapped animal.

You should...

- Pull your sleeves over your hands and try to maneuver the fence to release the raccoon.
- Go back to your house and get a pair of rubber gloves and a laundry basket to catch and release the stranded raccoon.
- Stop, take note of your location, and call animal control.



What option did you choose? Only option "C" lets you take a bite out of rabies, instead of rabies taking a bite out of you!

Rabies is a disease that affects the brain. It is caused by exposure to an animal that is infected by a virus. Rabies is always fatal in humans once clinical symptoms appear. Rabies is most commonly spread through infected saliva when an infected (rabid) animal bites you. It is also possible to become infected if the saliva of the infected animal gets directly into an open cut or wound, the eyes, mouth, or nose. In Iowa, wild animals such as raccoons, skunks, bats, foxes, and coyotes are much more likely to carry rabies, but pets such as dogs and cats can also be infected by the virus. The only way to know for sure if an animal

has rabies is by observing the animal in captivity for at least 10 days for rabies symptoms or by testing its brain after it is dead. Because rabid animals can look normal, the best prevention against rabies is avoiding bites from ALL animals. Prevention really is the best medicine!

### Prevention Tips:

- Be a responsible pet owner. Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets and keep them away from wild animals. Letting pets out to roam can expose them to possibly infected animals.
- Contact your veterinarian immediately if your pet is bitten by a wild animal or exposed to a bat, regardless of their rabies vaccination status.
- Avoid contact and interaction with unknown animals. Even animals that appear friendly can bite if provoked or when you are trying to help. Know that animals can easily bite through clothing and gloves. Your best protection is to call animal control to take care of removing nuisance or injured animals.
- Avoid contact with bats. If you wake to find a bat in your bedroom, leave the room, close the door, and call animal control to capture the bat for rabies testing. Bats have small teeth and you



could be bitten while sleeping without realizing it.

- Do not feed, try to catch, or play with wild animals.
- Teach children to stay away from unfamiliar animals. Even ones that look friendly.
- Do not disturb an animal while it is feeding or taking care of its young.
- Do not stick your fingers into animals' kennels or cages.

### What To Do If You Are Bitten

If a bite does happen, the first step you should take is to thoroughly wash the wound with soap and running water. Washing the bite area can greatly reduce the chances of becoming infected with the rabies virus as well as other harmful bacteria that could cause infection. Next, report the animal bite to the Humane Society of Scott County's Animal Control Program (563-388-6655) or your local law enforcement agency. Reporting the bite helps animal control collect valuable information about the animal and the incident. An animal bite should also be reported to your family doctor. Your doctor will decide if he/she needs to examine you. Your doctor will determine your risk of contracting rabies and whether treatment is needed. Even if the animal is not rabid, a bite can often become infected.

## Rabies Myths and Facts



**Myth:** There is a cure for rabies.

**Fact:** Rabies disease can be prevented. However, once clinical symptoms appear, rabies is always fatal in humans.

**Myth:** If you are exposed to rabies, to prevent the disease, a series of 20 shots are given in the stomach.

**Fact:** Disease prevention includes a series of shots but not nearly the 20 in the stomach as many people believe. Instead, one shot of rabies antibody and one rabies vaccine are given as soon as possible, followed by a series of three rabies vaccine injections that are provided over a two week period. This process is called post-exposure prophylaxis. If a person has been vaccinated for rabies before being exposed, this process will be a little different.

While this reality is a lot less scary than the myth, rabies exposure is nothing to ignore. If bitten by an animal, or if you wake up to see a bat in your bedroom, call animal control and contact your doctor immediately.

## Take It Outdoors

As Spring shows signs of awakening in our parks, the *Scott County Conservation Board* and *Wapsi River Center* offers a chance to get active outdoors. The multi-use parks and trails are open and offer walkers, hikers, outdoor lovers, or anyone, a healthy choice to unique opportunities for a healthier lifestyle by enjoying a variety of **free or low cost activities!**

Do you know where maple syrup comes from? Have you seen a trout in Iowa, or caught one? Remember flying kites as a kid and running in the open field? Do you enjoy volunteering while in the fresh outdoors? Have you ever wanted to try kayaking? If these activities sound inviting, you may find details by visiting : <http://www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/> and look under the "Events" section or look up the latest issue of the *W.R.E.N.*

Please look for low-impact outdoor opportunities in future newsletters that help sustain a healthy environment while providing quality, healthy, and enjoyable activities at no or low cost. A healthy park allows for a healthy you! - *Dave Murcia, Naturalist/Director, Wapsi River Center*



### MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

- *Scott County Board of Health Meeting, Scott County Administrative Center, 1st Floor Boardroom, 12:00PM Thursday, March 21, 2013.*

#### OUR MISSION:

The Scott County Health Department is committed to promoting, protecting and preserving the health of the community by providing leadership and direction as advocates for the individual, the family, the community and the environment we serve.

#### OUR VISION:

As recognized and respected leaders in serving and protecting our citizens, we at the Scott County Health Department are committed to a safer, healthier community and environment. In so doing, we provide a multitude of services with Professionalism, Responsiveness, Involvement, Dedication, and Excellence.

## SCOTT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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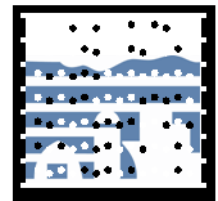
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