

Rabies

What is rabies?

Rabies is a preventable disease caused by a virus that makes the brain swell. It is rare in humans in the United States and more common in Asian and African countries where rabies is common in dogs. Once symptoms appear it is almost always fatal.



How do people and animals get rabies?

Rabies virus is spread in saliva from the bite of an animal that is sick with rabies. It can also spread if the saliva of an animal that is sick with rabies gets into a cut, scratch or other open wound.

What animals have rabies?

- Rabies is most often found in bats, skunks, raccoons and foxes, but other wild animals can also be infected.
- All mammals such as dogs, cats, horses and livestock can get sick with rabies, including humans.

- Small mammals such as squirrels, rats, mice and rabbits almost never have rabies.
- Reptiles and birds cannot get sick with rabies.

What are the symptoms of rabies in animals?

- Usually symptoms appear within 3-8 weeks of a bite from an infected animal, and very rarely as short as a few days or as long as several years
- Usually the first symptoms are: fever, headache, and general weakness or discomfort.

- Infected animals behave abnormally; examples include:
 - change in personality
 - aggression or anger
 - restlessness
 - irritability
 - trouble swallowing
 - stumbling or walking in circles
 - nighttime animals active during the day (i.e. skunks and bats out during the day).



(over)

What are the symptoms of rabies in humans?

- Symptoms usually start 8 weeks after a bite from an infected animal but can take longer.
- Usually the first symptoms are fever, headache and general weakness or discomfort.
- Other symptoms may include:
 - pain, itching, numbness or tingling at the bite site
 - Trouble breathing
 - Trouble swallowing
 - Confusion
 - Paralysis
 - Hyperactive



What should I do if I am bitten by an animal?

- Immediately clean the wound with soap and water.
- See a doctor who might prescribe medicine and a tetanus booster.
- Contact Tri-County Health Department who will determine if you should receive treatment to prevent rabies.

What can I do to prevent rabies?

- Do not feed, touch or handle wild animals.
- Have dogs, cats, horses and livestock vaccinated regularly for rabies by a licensed veterinarian.
- Keep control of your pets by having cats indoors and dogs on a leash.
- Spay or neuter your pets to reduce the number of unwanted or stray animals in your community.
- Call your local animal control office to remove stray animals from your neighborhood.
- Persons working with wildlife, veterinarians, and persons working with rabies in a lab should consider getting vaccinated against rabies.
- Call the Colorado Division of Wildlife office at 303-291-7227 if you have problems with wild animals.



For more information, please visit our website:
<http://www.tchd.org/396/Animal-Bites-Rabies>