

# RABIES

## What is rabies?

*Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. The virus lives in the saliva and brain tissue of infected mammals. Rabies is fatal once the virus reaches the brain. This means pets, livestock, wildlife and people are at risk.*

## How is rabies spread?

*Rabies is spread mainly through bites from infected animals. Rabies can also be passed by scratches from an infected animal or when infected saliva or brain tissue comes in contact with open wounds, skin breaks or mucous membranes. Rabies is carried mainly by wild animals including raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes. Dogs, cats and farm animals can easily pick up rabies from wild or stray animals.*

## How can I protect myself, my family and my pets?

- *Avoid contact with all wild animals. Never feed, handle or adopt wild animals as pets.*
- *Stay away from strays – they may not be properly vaccinated for rabies. Report stray dogs to Animal Control.*
- *Secure trash and any pet food stored outdoors in animal-proof containers to prevent access by wild and stray animals.*
- *See your veterinarian for information about rabies immunizations and boosters for both cats and dogs. See Licensing Information for county requirements.*
- *Confine your animals to your own property. Roaming animals are at greater risk for infection.*
- *Don't feed pets outdoors. The food will attract stray and wild animals.*
- *Contact your veterinarian and Animal Control if your pet is attacked or bitten. A rabies booster can help protect your pet. An unvaccinated pet poses a risk to you and your family.*

## What are the signs of rabies?

### **Dumb Rabies**

- *Animal is shy or hides*
- *Unusually approachable*
- *Sluggish, confused, depressed*
- *Paralysis, coma*

### **Furious Rabies**

- *Animal is excitable, irritable, aggressive*

- *Confused and calm, then suddenly attacks*
- *Loses fear of natural enemies*
- *Paralysis, coma*

### **Other signs**

- *Daytime activity in nocturnal animals*
- *Staggering, weakness*
- *Change in voice*
- *Inability to eat or drink*
- *Drooling*
- *Convulsions*
- *Frothing at the mouth*

### **What do I do if I'm bitten by an animal?**

- *Wash the wound thoroughly with warm, soapy water.*
- *If the animal is wild, confine it, if possible such as by placing a garbage can over the animal, and call Animal Control.*
- *If the animal is a pet, get the owner's name and address and ask for proof of rabies vaccination.*
- *Call your doctor and follow his/her advice for treatment.*
- *Report the bite to the Health Department **and** to Animal Control within 24 hours. The sooner you call, the more rapidly officials can respond to help locate and secure the bite animal. All pets suspected of rabies must be confined for 10 days of observation. Wild animals will be tested for the virus.*