

## PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR PET FROM RABIES

### What is rabies?

Rabies is a viral disease that can attack the central nervous system of mammals, including humans. Even though rabies is usually found in wild animals such as bats, raccoons, foxes and skunks, household pets also provide a link for the transmission of rabies to humans. Once clinical symptoms appear, rabies is almost always fatal.

### Animal symptoms

Animals with rabies may show a variety of clinical signs. The disease can appear in two forms:

#### DUMB RABIES

- Domestic animals may become depressed and try to hide in isolated places.
- Wild animals may lose their fear of humans and appear unusually friendly.
- Wild animals that usually only come out at night may be out during the day.
- Animals may have paralysis. Areas most commonly affected are the face or neck (which causes abnormal facial expressions or drooling) or the hind legs.

#### FURIOUS RABIES

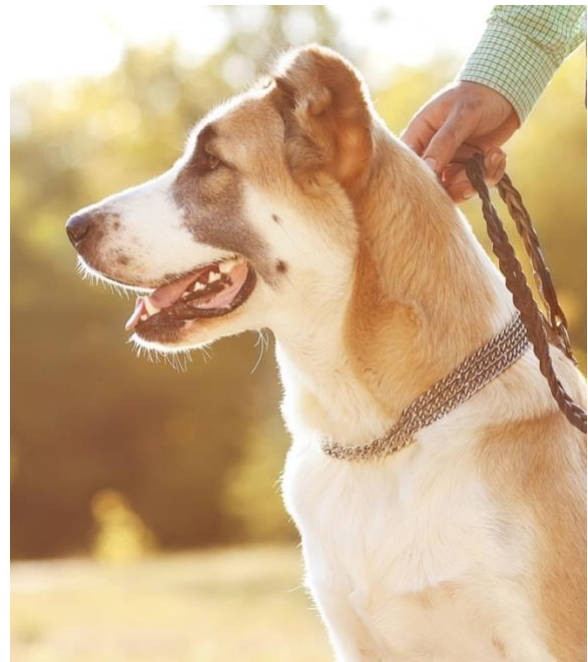
- Animals may become very excited and aggressive.
- Periods of excitement usually alternate with periods of depression.
- Animals may attack objects or other animals. They may even bite or chew their own limbs.



### How is rabies spread?

Rabies is transmitted through saliva – primarily via bite wounds. It can also be spread when infected saliva comes into contact with a scratch, open wound or the mucous membrane, such as those in the mouth, nasal cavity or eyes.

When the virus enters an animal's body, it spreads through the nerves to the brain, where it multiplies quickly. The virus then moves to the salivary glands and other parts of the body.



## Preventing human illness

If treatment is given promptly after being exposed to or bitten by an animal that could have rabies, human illness can be prevented. The following actions are recommended:

- Immediately wash the wound or exposed surface with soap and water.
- Remove any clothing that may have been contaminated.
- Seek medical advice as soon as possible.

The Eastern Ontario Health Unit (EOHU) is responsible for investigating reports of animal bites and suspicious direct human contacts with animals or bats that have occurred in the five Eastern Counties. All animal bites to humans must be reported to the EOHU by calling 613-933-1375 or 1 800 267-7120.

When the EOHU investigates a bite or a suspicious direct contact involving a dog, cat or ferret, we ask that the animal be confined for 10 days. If the animal is well at the end of the 10 days, it may be released.

## Preventing the spread of rabies

There are some simple ways that you can help prevent the spread of rabies:

- Vaccinate pets against rabies as recommended by your veterinarian.
- Don't let pets roam free.
- Avoid wild or domestic animals that are behaving strangely.
- Don't try to help an injured animal. Contact animal control or a professional for help.
- Keep a safe distance from wild animals, even if they look healthy. Do not attempt to raise orphaned wild animals.
- Attempt to keep bats from getting inside your home.
- Teach children not to touch wild animals or pets they don't know.

**Sources:** Canadian Food Inspection Agency Ontario  
Ministry of Natural Resources



## Incubation period

The incubation period is the amount of time it takes from when you are first infected to when you begin developing symptoms. For rabies, the incubation period may range from two weeks to many months, depending on the strain of rabies and the location of the bite.

However, it's important to be aware that an animal can transmit the disease several days before showing clinical signs.

