



Mason County PAWS Humane Society
Mason County, Michigan

RABIES IN DOGS AND CATS

WHAT IS RABIES?

Rabies is a preventable viral disease that affects the central nervous system in animals. The rabies virus infects the central nervous system of mammals, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death. It is most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. Rabies is not transmitted through the blood, urine or feces of an infected animal, nor is it spread airborne through the open environment.

WHICH ANIMALS CARRY RABIES

Rabies affects only mammals. Mammals are warm-blooded animals with fur. People are also mammals. Birds, snakes, and fish are not mammals, so they can't get rabies and they can't give it to you. Common rabid animals include bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes. Small rodents like squirrels, hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils, chipmunks, rats, mice, rabbits and hares are almost never found to be infected with rabies and have not been known to transmit rabies to humans.

RABIES IN HUMANS

While rabies is rare in people in the United States, with only 1 to 3 cases reported annually, about 55,000 Americans get treated each year out of an abundance of caution after being bitten or scratched by suspected infected animal.

SIGNS OF RABIES IN ANIMALS

Animals will not show signs immediately following exposure to a rabid animal. Symptoms can be varied and can take months to develop. Early signs of infection

can include general weakness, malaise, fever, and local itching or discomfort at the site of the bite.

Then, acute signs of brain dysfunction appear. The animal may exhibit restlessness, apprehension, aggression, shyness, irritability, unusually docile behavior in an active animal, biting or snapping.

As the disease progresses more acute symptoms develop including; heightened sensitivity to light, touch or sound, slack jaw, difficulty swallowing, heavy breathing, choking, eating unusual items, paralysis of the hind legs, staggering, loss of throat control, foaming at the mouth, disorientation or lack of coordination, loss of appetite, Weakness, Fear of water, Trembling, Dilated pupils, Seizures, Paralysis and ultimately death.

PREVENTION

Since there is no treatment for rabies in cats and dogs, prevention is the key. There are several things you can do to protect your pet from rabies.

First, visit your veterinarian with your pet on a regular basis and keep rabies vaccinations up-to-date for all cats and dogs.

Second, maintain control of your pets by keeping cats indoors and keeping dogs under direct supervision.

Third, spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or vaccinated regularly.

Useful Links:

<https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/animals/index.html>

<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/understanding-rabies>