



CITY OF CONCORD

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Health & Licensing

Rabies Fact Sheet

- **What is rabies?**

Rabies is a preventable disease caused by a virus. It occurs only in mammals (animals with fur or hair). Rabies affects the nervous system (brain and spinal cord), and is most commonly reported in wild animals like raccoons, foxes and bats.

- **How is rabies spread?**

Rabies is spread through infected saliva. The most common method of transmission is through the bite of an infected animal. There are some rare, documented cases of transmission through other routes such as mucous membranes (eyes, nose, mouth), aerosol transmission, and corneal and organ transplants.

- **What about bats?**

Bat bites are easy to miss, and may go unrecognized. Whenever there is human exposure to a bat, post-exposure treatment should be considered. If possible, submit the bat in question to a lab for testing.

- **What do I do if I think I have been exposed?**

Exposure is considered medically "urgent," but is not an emergency. Thoroughly wash the bite with soap and water immediately. Then, contact a doctor. A medical professional will evaluate the next steps. There is a post-exposure vaccine that may be recommended.

- **Are there treatment options?**

After symptoms have developed, rabies is almost always fatal. For this reason, it is important to prevent exposure whenever possible, and receive proper post-exposure treatment promptly. The post-exposure treatment consists of several doses of vaccine over a 14 day period. The current vaccines are relatively painless, and are given in the arm, like a flu shot.

- **How do I tell if an animal has rabies?**

Rabid animals may behave strangely. They may be drooling or frothing, be unusually aggressive, seem restless or stagger. Not all rabid animals show symptoms immediately. For this reason, it is important to stay away from wild animals. In humans, symptoms include the inability to swallow, hallucinations, anxiety and confusion. Rabies among humans is very rare in the United States.

- **How do I prevent rabies?**

Get your pets vaccinated for rabies. NH RSA 436:100 states that rabies vaccination is required for all dogs, cats and ferrets three months of age and older. If you see a wild animal exhibiting signs of rabies, stay away from that animal, and call local animal control. Do not pet or feed wild animals. Do not handle road kill. Keep pets indoors during the night, and only feed your pets inside.

Source: CDC-Rabies <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>