

Rabies



WILDLIFE HEALTH PROGRAM

What is rabies?

Rabies is caused by a virus that infects the central nervous system of all mammals, including people, pets, and livestock. However, most cases of rabies in North America occur in wildlife (~90%), with it most commonly found in raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes. Cases are typically 100% fatal once visible symptoms appear.

What are the symptoms of rabies?

Both wild and domestic animals with rabies can exhibit a wide range of possible symptoms (which can resemble other wildlife diseases, such as canine distemper). These can include excessive aggression, agitation, a lack of fear (especially towards people), incoordination, weakness, a head tilt, difficulty breathing and swallowing, excessive salivation, lethargy, and/or paralysis.

How is rabies spread?

Rabies is spread through saliva and neural tissue (spinal or brain cord matter). It is not spread through blood, urine, or feces. Rabies exposure to people and other animals occurs in the following ways:

- A direct bite from a rabid animal.
- A scratch from a rabid animal that breaks the skin.
- Saliva or neural tissue (spinal cord or brain matter) from a rabid animal coming into contact with a wound or a break in the skin.

Does rabies pose a risk to people and other animals?

Rabies is transmissible to all mammals, including people, pets, and livestock. It is 100% fatal if left untreated. Vaccines are available for pets and livestock.



Prevent Rabies

- Do not approach or touch wildlife
- Do not feed wildlife
- Do not leave pet food outside
- Secure trash cans to avoid attracting wildlife
- Vaccinate pets against rabies
- Keep pets away from wildlife

IMPORTANT: Do not approach any animal that appears ill or is behaving strangely as it may have rabies. Rabies is transmissible to people and 100% fatal once symptoms occur.

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