

other domestic animals including horses. Consult with your vet for his or her recommendation. Although wild animal populations are the major reservoir of rabies, domestic dogs and cats are the primary carriers of rabies to humans. Therefore, if the majority of pets in a community are immunized, an effective biological barrier will be maintained between humans and rabid wild animals.



WHAT TO DO IF BITTEN

- ◆ Immediately wash the wound with lots of soap and water.
- ◆ Confine the animal where no one else can come in contact with it. Take care to prevent additional bites. If assistance is needed to capture a wild animal, contact a professional nuisance animal control company.
- ◆ If the suspect animal must be killed, do not damage the head as rabies testing is done on the brain.
- ◆ Do not delay seeking medical advice. Go to your family doctor or emergency room.
- ◆ Call your county or city Health Department for advice, and information on testing the animal rabies exposure.
- ◆ When dealing with a dead animal, wear gloves or use a shovel if you need to move the animal. Follow the advice of the Health Department for handling the dead animal. Do not freeze it. Clean the area and tools with bleach and water.

GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

To protect yourself and your family:

- ◆ Do not put out feed that is attractive to mammals.
- ◆ Do not feed, touch, or adopt wild animals as pets, and be cautious of stray dogs or cats.
- ◆ Instruct children to leave wild animals alone. Be sure your child knows to tell you if they were bitten or scratched by an animal.
- ◆ Never leave your pets outdoors unattended, and vaccinate them against rabies.
- ◆ Tightly cap trash cans, and remove pet food that is not immediately consumed by your pet.

PRECAUTIONS FOR HUNTERS AND TRAPPERS

- Be alert to the possible presence of rabies in wild mammals, particularly raccoons, foxes, and skunks.
- Avoid contact with nervous system tissues (brain, spinal cord), blood, and saliva of freshly killed animals.
- Do not handle wild animals that behave abnormally.
- If you handle raccoons, foxes, or skunks you may wish to discuss the potential benefits of a pre-exposure rabies vaccination with your health care provider.
- Hunting dogs should be vaccinated against rabies.
- Wear protective gloves when skinning and cleaning wild game, and always wash hands thoroughly after handling wild game.
- Cook meat thoroughly.



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Publication 136
(R108)

Division of Wildlife
Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Rabies in Ohio Wildlife



Rabies, the most feared of all wildlife diseases in the United States, is caused by a virus that can be contracted by all mammals, including humans. Several thousand cases in wild animals and livestock are confirmed annually in the U.S.

Rabies virus is always present in some wild animal populations. However, rabies outbreaks can occur in excessively high wildlife populations. Rabies outbreaks may occur at any time of year, but the highest incidence is during the spring and summer months. The disease usually recedes within a year in any outbreak area. Wild animals most commonly infected in Ohio are raccoons, skunks, foxes, and bats.

People and their pets are at risk to contract rabies from wild animals. Exposure for most humans and their pets occurs through contact with a wild animal. The rabies virus, present in the infected animal's saliva, invades the nerve tissue of the person who is bitten or exposed to the saliva. Nervous system tissue involvement eventually includes the spinal column and brain, and once symptoms develop, rabies is almost always fatal.

The symptoms of rabies occur after a highly variable incubation period ranging from two weeks to several months. A change in behavior is one symptom. An animal that is normally timid can become quite bold when rabid. Frothing or slobbering from the mouth may or may not occur. Uncoordination, spasms, tremors, and paralysis usually are followed by death.

Symptoms of rabies vary greatly from one species of animal to another and also within a species. The only way of positively diagnosing the disease is by laboratory examination of the suspected animal's brain tissue.

Beginning in the late 1970s, a strain of rabies associated with raccoons spread rapidly along the East Coast of the United States. In 1996, raccoon rabies moved into northeast Ohio from western Pennsylvania. In response to this threat the Ohio Department of Health, USDA Wildlife Services, and Division of Wildlife formed the Rabies and Zoonoses Control Program. The goal of the program was to stop the spread of rabies through the state of Ohio. To accomplish the goal, an Oral Rabies Vaccine Baiting Program was started and involves dropping hundreds of thousands of vaccine-laden baits in a zone near the Pennsylvania border. Raccoons eat the bait, immunizing them against rabies. Visit the Ohio Department of Health's website at www.odh.gov for more information.

For this reason, **wild animals should never be trapped and released in another area. One rabid animal transported west of the barrier would negate years of work combating this deadly disease.**

The best protection against rabies is prevention. Do not allow pets to roam free. All furred pets should be vaccinated. Some veterinarians are also recommending rabies vaccinations for

