



Rabies – Fact Sheet

About Rabies Disease

Rabies is a viral disease that attacks the central nervous system of humans and warm-blooded animals. Once signs of disease begin to appear, rabies is almost always fatal.

Transmission of rabies

People and animals can contract the virus after they are bitten by an infected animal. It is also possible that people may get rabies if saliva gets directly into their eyes, nose, mouth, into a wound or break in the skin.

Signs of rabies in animals

The animal may have a change in personality or behaviour. Wild animals may lose their fear of humans and pets may become aggressive or withdraw. Often, the animal does not eat, may avoid water, and have an unsteady gait. Paralysis may start in the rear quarters and progress to the front of the body. A diseased animal may drool excessively and the tongue might hang from the mouth. Nocturnal (active at night) animals may be seen during the daytime and could appear friendly or fearless when this is not normal for them.

Treatment

Wash the wound or saliva-exposed area thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention immediately to decrease the chance of infection. A person that has been exposed to rabies is given post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).



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Prevention

Dogs, cats, horses and ferrets should be vaccinated against rabies. Livestock and other animals that have frequent contact with humans should be vaccinated. Reduce the possibility of your pets being exposed to rabid animals by not letting them roam free.

If you suspect an animal has rabies

Rabies is a reportable disease where cases are confirmed.

Animal bites need to be reported to your physician and require prompt medical attention, even if it is not obvious the exposure is to rabies. Your veterinarian and physician can help work with the appropriate authorities to record rabies related incidents.

(3.11.2016)

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