



Rabies – Prevention Tips for Pet Owners

Facts

- Although there are now fewer cases, rabies remains a problem in North America. Wildlife species are the only carriers of the disease, with occasional cases affecting domestic animal and human populations.
- Cats are more likely to be infected with rabies than dogs! This is probably because they are less likely to be vaccinated and may not be well supervised when outdoors.

Rabies Prevention Starts with the Animal Owner/Caregiver

- All dogs, cats, horses and ferrets should be vaccinated against rabies. Consider vaccinating livestock or any other close contact mammals because animals that have frequent contact with humans should be vaccinated to help prevent exposure to the virus.
- You can reduce the possibility of your pets being exposed to rabies by not letting them roam free.
- Neutering (spay, castration) of your pets may decrease undesirable behaviour, like aggression and roaming.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals — even if they appear friendly.



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Reduce the Risk of Exposure to Rabies from Wildlife

- Don't leave garbage or pet food outside, as it may attract wild or stray animals.
- Wild animals should not be kept as pets. Observe wild animals from a distance.
- Do not feed or handle them — even if they appear friendly. If you see a wild animal acting strangely, report it to city or county animal control personnel.

What to do When a Pet Bites Someone

- Contact your local health department. The person bitten should receive prompt medical attention after immediate gentle flushing of the wound.
- A dog, cat or ferret that bites a human will need to be examined by a veterinarian and quarantined for 10 days, regardless of vaccine status.
- Promptly report any illness or unusual behaviour of your pet to your veterinarian.

What to do When Your Pet gets Bitten by Another Animal

- Consult your veterinarian immediately. They will examine your pet and assess your pet's vaccination and other medical or surgical needs. Dogs, cats and ferrets can sometimes be observed for up to six months to see if they develop signs of rabies; the time depends on their vaccine status.
- Contact the appropriate authorities if your pet was bitten by a stray or wild animal (varies by province) — your veterinarian can assist.
- Identifying or safely capturing the animal that bit your pet will help determine if your pet was exposed to rabies, but it is very important that you do not risk getting bitten yourself.
- The biting animal may be tested for rabies; this requires euthanasia and testing of brain material.

What to do if you are bitten by an animal

- Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water. Contact your physician immediately. Prompt and appropriate preventative treatment after being bitten and before the disease develops can help stop rabies.

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