



Rabies is a deadly disease with no cure. It can attack animals anywhere in the world. Rabies can be prevented by simply not having contact with rabid animals. Learn about rabies and its prevention, and share what you learn with your family and friends. Help make the outdoors safe and keep our pets safe as well.

Rabies Facts

- Rabies is caused by a tiny germ called a *virus* (VIE-rus). It kills almost any animal or human who gets sick from it.
- A healthy animal, or you, can get rabies when bitten, licked or scratched by a sick animal. That's because the virus lives in saliva in the sick animal's mouth. You can also get rabies if the saliva gets into a cut or scratch.
- Only mammals get rabies. Birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians don't.
- There are two types of rabies: *aggressive rabies*—where the animal has an unusual growl or bark, drools and attacks sudden noise, movement or light; and *dumb or paralytic rabies*—where the animal has trouble eating, drinking, and walking. The jaw and legs become paralyzed.

Rabies DOs

- **Do** stay a safe distance away from all wild animals, even if they seem tame and friendly. A rabid animal, one that has rabies, sometimes acts tame.
- **Do** try to keep track of an animal that bites or scratches you. Call the public health department and tell them what happened. Describe the animal to them. The health department may tell you to keep the animal in sight until someone comes to catch it. *Don't try to catch it yourself.*
- **Do** wash out your wounds with soap and water, and then go see your doctor immediately.
- **Do** make sure your dog or cat has an up-to-date rabies shot. Even if your pet stays inside or is always on a leash, it needs a rabies shot regularly.

Rabies DON'Ts

- **Don't** panic when you see a wild animal.
- **Don't** let anyone destroy an animal just because there may be a rabies outbreak in your area.
- **Don't** go near raccoons, skunks, foxes and bats wandering around in the daytime. They may be rabid since these animals usually come out only at night.
- **Don't** leave garbage or pet food outside. It attracts wild and stray animals. If you must leave garbage outside, put it in sturdy metal cans with tight-fitting lids.
- **Don't** try to help an injured animal. It's probably scared and might bite you. Instead, remember where you saw it and call an animal control officer to come pick it up.
- Most important of all, please **don't** be afraid of all wild animals. Remember that very, very few of them have rabies. Do watch them and learn about them in their wild homes, but only from a distance!



South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
Promoting and protecting the health of the public and the environment
www.scdhec.gov/rabies