

What is Rabies?

Rabies is a viral disease that attacks nerve and brain tissue. In South Carolina, raccoons, foxes, skunks and bats account for the highest number of reported rabies cases in animals. Rarely infected are rats, mice, squirrels, rabbits and hamsters.



How Does it Spread?

Rabies is transmitted by a rabid animal biting a healthy one. The virus passes from the saliva of the sick animal through the wound into the healthy animal. It also can be spread when the saliva of a rabid animal enters an opening in the skin, such as a cut or scratch.

Symptoms of Rabies in Animals

Rabid animals appear to act differently than normal. They can be:

- Wild animals that seem to be friendly or tame;
- Wild animals being seen in the daytime that are normally seen only at night;
- Pets that seem to have a hard time walking, eating or drinking;
- Animals showing signs of excitement or meanness.

Don't think that rabid animals can be spotted easily because they drool or foam at the mouth. This happens only some of the time in the latter stages of the disease.



Symptoms of Rabies in Man

Early symptoms in humans include irritability, headache, fever, and sometimes itching or pain at the site of exposure. The disease eventually progresses to paralysis, convulsions and death. **There is no cure for rabies.**

Prevention

Vaccinate your dog or cat. Pets are more likely to be bitten by wild animals. Because of this, S.C. law requires pets to be regularly vaccinated against rabies. Vaccinating your dog or cat not only protects the pet, but also protects family members who come in contact with the pet.

Do not allow your dog or cat to run free.

Avoid strange-acting animals, both domestic and wild. Teach your children to stay away from wild animals and unknown dogs and cats. Make sure they tell you if they are bitten or scratched by an animal.

Don't attempt to keep wild animals as pets. There is no rabies vaccine licensed for use in wild animals.



Rabies

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South Carolina Department of Health
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*Promoting and protecting the health of the public
and the environment*

Rabies Prevention
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What to do if bitten by an animal?

1. Immediately wash any wounds with soap and water.
2. Call your health care provider and follow his recommendations.
3. Report the bite to your DHEC Environmental Health Services office. It is their responsibility to require quarantining or testing of biting animals for rabies.
4. Do not kill any animal in such a way that the head will be damaged. The head must be in good condition for laboratory testing.

For additional information, contact your DHEC Environmental Health Services office.