



RABIES PREVENTION

- **Vaccination**

-Ensure that your pets, such as dogs and cats, are vaccinated against rabies. Regularly updating their vaccinations will help prevent the spread of the disease.

- **Avoid Stray Animals**

-Promote responsible pet ownership and support your local animal control program. Ensure your dog is vaccinated and supervised if they're outside.

- **Educated Children**

-Teach children to stay away from unfamiliar animals, particularly those that don't live in your home, or those that are acting strangely or aggressively. Instruct them to report any bites or scratches to an adult immediately.

- **Wildlife Interaction**

-Avoid feeding, touching, or handling wild animals, including bats, raccoons, foxes, and skunks. Keep your distance and admire them from afar.

- **Seek Medical Attention**

-If you're bitten or scratched by an animal, even if the wound appears minor, wash the area thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention promptly. The healthcare provider will assess the risk of rabies transmission and may recommend a post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) treatment.



Request Service: (515) 222-3321

General Questions: (515) 222-3364

Pet Licenses: (515) 222-3600

RABIES



UNDERSTANDING RABIES

What Is Rabies?

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. The virus is secreted in saliva and is usually transmitted to people and animals by a bite from an infected animal. Less commonly, rabies can be transmitted when saliva from a rabid animal comes in contact with an open cut on the skin or the eyes, nose, or mouth of a person or animal. Once the outward signs of the disease appear, rabies is nearly always fatal.

What Animal Can Get Rabies?

Only mammals can get rabies; birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians do not. Most cases of rabies occur in wild animals, mainly skunks, raccoons, bats, coyotes, and foxes. In recent years, cats have become the most common domestic animal infected with rabies. This is because many cat owners do not vaccinate their cats before the cats are exposed to rabid wildlife outdoors. Rabies also occur in dogs and cattle in significant numbers and, while not as common, has been diagnosed in horses, goats, sheep, swine, and ferrets.

What Are The Signs Of Rabies In Animals?

Once the rabies virus enters the body, it travels along the nerves to the brain. Dogs and cats with rabies may show a variety of signs, including fearfulness, aggression, excessive drooling, difficulty swallowing, staggering, and seizures. In addition to those signs seen in dogs and cats, horses, cattle, sheep, and goats with rabies may exhibit depression, self mutilation, or increased sensitivity to light.



What If My Pet Has Bitten Or Scratched Someone?

- Urge the victim to see a physician immediately and to follow the physician's recommendations.
- Check with your veterinarian to determine if your pet's vaccinations are up-to-date.
- Report the bite to Westcom in West Des Moines, at **515-222-3321**, and a Neighborhood Service Specialist or West Des Moines Police Officer will meet with you and the victim to make a report.
- You will need a copy of current vaccination records from your vet, that shows when the rabies vaccination was administered.
- If your pet is not current on its rabies vaccination, you may take your dog to your vet to quarantine for 10 days or a Neighborhood Services Specialist can also impound your pet for the 10 days to quarantine. Fees for care, are to be paid before your pet is released back to you.
- After the 10 day quarantine period, have your pet vaccinated for rabies if its vaccination is not current.

Did You Know?

- Rabies is preventable.
- There is treatment for rabies, but it must be given correctly and immediately after exposure to bite or scratch from an animal.
- Rabies can be transmitted by the bite of any infected mammal.

What Can I Do To Help Control Rabies?

- Have your veterinarian vaccinate your pet, horses and livestock. Your veterinarian will advise you on the recommended or required frequency of vaccination.
- Reduce the possibility of exposure to rabies by not letting your pets roam free.
- Supervise your dogs when they are outside.
- Spaying or neutering your pet may decrease roaming tendencies and will prevent them from contributing to the birth of unwanted animals.
- Don't leave exposed garbage or pet food outside, as it may attract wild or stray animals.
- Observe all wild animals from a distance. A rabid wild animal may appear tame but don't go near it. Teach children NEVER to handle unfamiliar animals or pets, even if they appear friendly.
- Bat-proof your home and other structures to prevent bats from nesting and having access to people. If you believe you've been bitten by a bat, Contain the bat if possible or call Neighborhood Services Specialist to contain it for you. The bat will be needed for testing. You will need to take the bat to:

Iowa State University
Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
Phone: (515)-294-1950

There is a charge for rabies testing at ISU VDL; please note if human exposure has occurred to ensure prompt testing

