

Rabies Information

Rabies virus must have a live host to live. Once the host dies, the virus will start to die within 15 minutes. If you find domestic or wildlife dead on or near your property, you may bury or bag it. As with any dead animal, you should not handle the carcass with bare hands.

Rabies Transmission

Rabies transmission may occur as a result of animal bites, non-bite exposure, or human-to-human exposure. In most cases of rabies, transmission of the virus is caused by the bite of a rabid animal. Transmission of rabies cannot occur through casual contact, such as touching a person with rabies, or contact with non-infectious fluid or tissue (e.g., urine, blood, or feces).

Rabies Transmission through Non-Bite Exposure

Rabies transmission from non-bite exposures is rare. Scratches, abrasions, open wounds, or mucous membranes contaminated with saliva or other potentially infectious material (such as brain tissue) from a rabid animal, constitute non-bite exposures. Occasionally reports of non-bite exposure are such that post-exposure prophylaxis is given.

Inhalation of aerosolized rabies virus is also a potential non-bite route of exposure, but with the exception of laboratory workers, most people are unlikely to encounter an aerosol version of the rabies virus.

Other contact, such as petting a rabid animal, or contact with the blood, urine, or feces (e.g., guano) of a rabid animal, does not constitute an exposure and is not an indication for prophylaxis.

Rabies in Animals: An Overview

Although all species of mammals can become infected with the **rabies virus**, only a few species are best able to spread the virus to other mammals. The animals that most commonly transmit **rabies** to other animals include:

- Raccoons
- Skunks
- Foxes
- Coyotes
- Bats

Domestic animals can also get rabies. Cats, cattle, and dogs are the most frequently reported rabid domestic animals in the United States. Only mammals get rabies. Birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish do not get the disease.

Wild Animals with Rabies

Outbreaks of infections in terrestrial mammals, such as raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes, are found in broad geographic regions across the United States.

Small rodents (such as squirrels, rats, mice, hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils, and chipmunks) and lagomorphs (such as rabbits and hares) are almost never found to be infected with rabies and have not been known to cause rabies among humans in the United States. Bites by these animals are usually not considered a risk of infection, unless the animal was sick or behaving in any unusual manner and rabies is widespread in your area. www.emed.com

Rabid animals usually stop eating and drinking, and may appear to want to be left alone. After the initial onset of symptoms, the animal may become vicious or begin to show signs of paralysis. Some rabid animals bite at the slightest provocation and others may be somnolent and difficult to arouse. Once the animal shows signs of paralysis, the disease progresses very quickly and the animal dies. <http://www.animalhealthchannel.com/rabies/symptoms.shtml>