PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY FROM RABIES EXPOSURE

What is rabies?
Rabies is a virus that affects the brain and nerves in mammals.

How is rabies spread?
The rabies virus is spread through the saliva of a rabid animal usually because a rabid animal bites or scratches another person or animal. The virus may also get into the body through open cuts or wounds, or through eyes, nose, or mouth.

What animals can spread rabies?
Rabies is spread mostly by wild animals. In the United States rabies is usually found in raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes, and bats. Domestic animals and farm animals can get rabies from wild animals. This is why it's so important to vaccinate pets and livestock. These are the animals that people are around the most. Pets and stray animals can be the link between wild animals and people. Any mammal can get rabies. Although it is possible for rodents to get the disease, animals like mice, rats, and squirrels almost never carry rabies.

How can I tell if an animal has rabies?
You can't tell if an animal has rabies. When an animal is sick with rabies, it may behave strangely, but a rabid animal may also appear healthy or even tame. The only way to tell if an animal has rabies is by testing it in a laboratory, or for some pets and livestock, by a quarantine to see if rabies develops.

What can I do to prevent rabies?
- Vaccinate your pets!
- Do not attempt to stop fights between your pet and a wild animal.
- Do not feed or handle wild animals. Teach children that although a baby skunk or raccoon may look cute and friendly, it can be very dangerous.
- Do not feed or touch stray animals and avoid all sick, strange-acting, even friendly animals.
- Cover your garbage cans and don't leave pets' food outside where it can attract wild animals.
- Do not keep wild animals as pets. Not only is this dangerous for you and the animal, it's against the law.
- Do not touch or pick up dead animals.
- Leave bats alone.
- Never handle a bat, especially with bare hands. Use thick gloves, tongs, or a shovel to remove a dead bat, or call in bat removal experts. Don't crush the bat with a tennis racquet or other object.
- Do not let your pet play with bats.
- Report dead bats to your County Public Health office.
- Keep bats out of the house or other buildings by closing or covering the attic or other dark sheltered areas. Put screens on windows.

What should I do if my pet or I am exposed to an animal that might have rabies?

If **you** have been bitten, scratched, or exposed to an animal's saliva:
- Wash the wound right away with soap and water for ten minutes.
- Call your County Public Health office.
- Get a description of the animal that bit or scratched you.

If **your pet** has been bitten, scratched, or exposed to an animal's saliva:
- Try to find out what type of animal bit or scratched your pet. **Do not touch the attacking animal.**
- Use gloves or a hose to wash your pet's wound. **Do not touch your pet with your bare hands.** There may be saliva from the rabid animal still on your pet even if you don't see a bite or wound.
- Call your veterinarian.
- Call you local animal control officer. He or she will know the right steps to protect you and your pet.

What about bats and rabies?
Bats can are carriers of rabies and their bite or scratch may be too small to notice. In fact, people sleeping in the same room where a bat is found, or children who have been alone in a room with a bat, should contact your County Public Health office.

What do I do if I find a bat in my house?
- Close the windows, closet doors, and the door to the room.
- Turn on the lights if the room is dark and wait for the bat to land.
- Wear thick gloves and cover the bat with a coffee can or other hard container. It may be necessary to use a fly swatter or tennis racquet to stop the bat and knock it to the floor.
- Slide a piece of cardboard under the can trapping the bat.
- Tape the cardboard tightly to can.
- Contact your County Public Health office to determine if the bat needs to be tested.

Any live or dead bat that may have had contact with a person should be captured and reported to your County Public Health office.