

## **Rabies Information**

Rabies is an infectious viral disease that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. Each year over 7,000 animals, most of them wild, are diagnosed with the disease in the United States, except in Hawaii.

People get rabies from the bite of an infected animal (with rabies). Any wild mammal, like a raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote or bat, can have rabies and transmit it to people. In the United States, about 18,000 people receive post-exposure treatment each year because of contact with animals suspected of being rabid.

It is possible, but quite rare, for people to contract rabies from material of a rabid animal. For example, infected saliva could enter the eyes, nose, mouth or an open wound.

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Although it is not possible to determine if an animal is infected with rabies by simple observation, signs in an animal, which should lead you to suspect that it may be rabid, are:

- Changes in an animal's behavior
  - Fever
  - Loss of appetite
  - Problem swallowing
  - Increase in drool/saliva
  - Excessive irritability
  - Unusual vocalization
  - Wild animals that appear abnormally tame or sick
  - Tremors/convulsions
  - Unprovoked aggression
  - Restlessness
  - Difficulty moving or paralysis
  - Death
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### **Animal Bites**

If bitten by a domestic or wild animal, it is recommended you do the following:

1. If exposed, immediately wash the site with soap and water. Squeeze the area to make the wound bleed.
2. Contact the proper animal control agency and your personal doctor or the Department of Health for further advisement.
3. Receive medical assistance.

## Human Rabies Symptoms

- Loss of consciousness
  - Fever
  - Headache
  - Anxiety
  - Insomnia
  - Hypersalivation (foaming at the mouth)
  - Convulsions
  - Symptoms appear within 20 to 60 days
  - Once symptoms appear, death usually follows
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## Rabies Transmission

(An example)

1. A rabid raccoon bites a dog.
  2. Rabies virus enters the dog through infected saliva.
  3. Rabies virus spreads through the nerves to the spinal cord and brain.
  4. The virus incubates in the dog's body about 3 – 12 weeks. The dog has no signs of illness during this time.
  5. When it reaches the brain, the virus multiplies rapidly, passes to the salivary glands, and the dog begins to show signs of disease.
  6. Infected animals usually die within 7 days of becoming sick.
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## Rabies Prevention

The best method to prevent rabies transmission to you or your family is to vaccinate your pets. Dogs, cats, and ferrets need to be vaccinated for rabies to provide a barrier between you and the infected animal. The following are other prevention methods:

- Put identification and rabies tags on your pets. If in Fort Wayne, you must have a permit for the animal.
- Keep trash in metal or hard plastic containers with tight-fitting lids.
- Stay away from stray domestic and wild animals, especially those that are acting strangely.
- Walk your dog with a leash. Do not let your dog or cat run loose.
- Do not leave pet food outside between meal times.
- If a bat is inside your house, open windows/doors to let it escape or contact the proper animal control agency to capture it.
- Make your house inaccessible to wild animals.

- Wild animals should not be kept as pets.
  - Do not handle sick or injured animals.
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### **Bats and Sleeping Children/Elderly**

If a bat is found in the same room as a sleeping child or elderly person, assume the bat bit the person. It is difficult to detect a bat bite. Contact the proper animal control agency to capture the bat for testing. If you decide to capture the bat yourself, wear a heavy glove and scoop up the bat in a coffee can with a lid. If you have to kill the bat, try not to damage the head.

### **Animal Control Agencies**

Allen County Sheriff's Department	449-7491
Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control	427-1244
New Haven Police Department	493-1517

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### **Nuisance wildlife**

If a wild animal is causing a nuisance around the house, there are three options the homeowner/occupant can do.

- The animal can be left alone. It may move on to another area.
  - Purchase a live-catch trap and place in area where the animal is established. After capturing the animal, take great care in picking up the trap and releasing the animal at a park or in the woods a few miles away.
  - Look in the yellow pages in the phone book and contact a private wildlife control company to remove the animal. Obviously there will be a charge.
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### **Information about Rabies**

[www.rabies.com](http://www.rabies.com)

[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/introduction/intro.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/introduction/intro.htm)

[www.travelvacs.us](http://www.travelvacs.us)

[www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/rabies.htm](http://www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/rabies.htm)