



RABIES

Rabies is a viral disease that attacks the nervous system and is virtually always fatal. It is commonly found in Michigan in bats, skunks, foxes and raccoons. Unvaccinated pets and livestock can also be infected. Unvaccinated cats and bats are the most common animals with rabies in the United States. The saliva of an infected animal entering the body through open cuts, wounds, eyes, nose or mouth spreads rabies. This is done through the rabid animal biting or scratching a person or animal.

The virus only infects mammals. Birds, fish, snakes, and amphibians do not carry rabies. The following animals almost never carry rabies: chipmunks, gophers, ger-

bils, mice, moles, hamsters, prairie dogs, rabbits, rats, shrews, squirrels, moles, guinea pigs and muskrats. Domestic animals like dogs, cats, ferrets and farm animals can get rabies from wild animals. ***This is why it is so important to vaccinate pets and livestock.*** These animals act like a bridge between wild animals and people, bringing rabies from wild animals into your home.

Bats can be dangerous carriers of rabies because their bite or scratch maybe too small to see. A bat's teeth and claws are so small that a bite may not bleed or even hurt. 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 see a doctor immediately. Treatment is usually a series of 5 injections of rabies vaccine and one shot of Human Rabies Immune Globulin. Any live or dead bat that may have had contact with a person should be tested for rabies.

Species in Michigan 2006	# positive
Big brown bat	36
Little brown bat	2
Hoary bat	1
Skunk	3
Red fox	1
Cow	1
Horse	4
Cat	1
All species total	49

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.



Preventing Rabies

- ◆ **Vaccinate your pet!** Cats, dogs and ferrets all need to be vaccinated by a veterinarian regularly.
- ◆ **Do not try to separate fighting animals.**
- ◆ 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 or strange-acting animals.
- ◆ Cover your garbage cans and don't leave pet food outside where it can attract wild animals.
- ◆ Never feed pets outdoors so as not to attract stray or wild animals to your property.
- ◆ Do not keep wild animals as pets. This dangerous for you, the animal and 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.
- ◆ Keep bats out of the house or other buildings by closing or covering areas.
- ◆ Put screens on your windows.



If you have been bitten, scratched or exposed to an animal's saliva:

1. Wash that wound right away with soap and water for ten minutes.
2. Call your doctor or go to the emergency room.
3. Get a description of the animal that bit or scratched you.
4. Call your local animal control officer or the police department for assistance. The animal that bit or scratched you may have to be tested for rabies or quarantined.

The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

Benton Harbor

769 Pipestone
P.O. Box 706
926-7121

M-139 Office
2106 S. M-139
927-5623

School Based
870 Colfax Ave
925-4500

Niles

1205 N. Front St.
684-2800

Three Oaks

21 N. Elm
756-2008

Or visit us on the web at www.berriencohthdept.org

Berrien County Health

Department:

Preventing Disease,
Prolonging Life and
Protecting the
Health of the
Community.



BATS, BUGS & BACTERIA

The warm humid air of July makes this time of year a high-risk period for bugs and bacteria. The Berrien County Health Department will provide you with information throughout the month on West Nile Virus, foodborne illnesses, rabies, E.Coli and outbreaks. For more information on any of these topics, **please call the Berrien County Health Department at 269-926-7121. Happy Summer!**



927-5627

SERVICES AVAILABLE:

Berrien County Health Department

The Health Department Public Health Nursing section investigates all animal bites. The Emergency rooms usually report the bites to the health department but you can call the Health Department and report the animal bite yourself. The Health Department in turn notifies the Berrien County Animal Control.

For more information on Rabies or to report an animal bite, call 927-5627 and ask for the nurse in charge.

If your pet has been bitten:

Try to find out what type of animal bit or scratched your pet. 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 and call your local animal control officer (471-7531).

This page is sponsored by the Berrien County Health Department

