



Rabies

Rabies is a viral disease that attacks the nervous system and is virtually always fatal. It is found in Michigan in bats, skunks, foxes and raccoons. Unvaccinated pets and livestock can also be infected. 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 another 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, gerbils, 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 are the animals that 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 may be too small to see. A bat's teeth and claws are so small that a bite may not bleed or even hurt. 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 for rabies

treatment of five injections with rabies vaccine and one shot of Human Rabies Immune Globulin given immediately. Any live or dead bat that may have had contact with a person should be tested for rabies.

nated by a veterinarian regularly. If you own livestock, you can make sure their vaccinations are up-to-date. Confine your pets to your property to reduce their risk for rabies exposure and infection.



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, it 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.

How can I prevent rabies?

Vaccinate your pet! Cats, dogs and ferrets all need to be vacci-

• 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 pets food outside where it can attract wild animals. Never feed pets outdoors so as not to attract stray animals to your property.

- Do not keep wild animals as pets. Not only is this dangerous for you and the animal, it's also against the law.
- Do not touch dead animals.
- 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 pets play with bats.
- Keep bats out of the house or other buildings by closing or covering areas. Put screens on the windows.

Berrien County Health

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



Bats, Bugs, and Bacteria

In July, the Health Department will focus on Bats, Bugs, and Bacteria (and some other things we will all encounter being outdoors in this hot summer month). Foodborne Illness Outbreaks, 4th of July Safety, Rabies, Lyme Disease, and Youth Fair will be highlighted this month. For questions about any of these topics, please call the health department at 926-7121.

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 that wound right away with soap and water for ten minutes.
- Call your doctor or a hospital emergency room.
- Get a description of the animal that bit or scratched you.
- 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.

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 your local animal control officer. He or she will know the right steps to protect you and your pet.

For more information, call the health department at

926-7121

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.berriencohlthdept.org

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