

Rabies can be spread through a variety of mammals. Some might be surprising.



# RABIES

Controlling human risk

A goal of public health is to control the human risk of exposure and offer prophylaxis to people who have potentially been exposed to the deadly virus, which attacks the nervous system of its victims.

**Rabies is spread** when an infected animal's saliva or nervous system tissue comes in contact with a break in the skin. An animal bite or scratch where the infected animal's saliva has entered the wound or a mucous membrane of a human can be the way the virus is transmitted. Find out more about rabies transmission at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/transmission/index.html>

## After a bite, remember four steps:



**Wash** the wound with soap and water for 15 minutes.



**Go** to the emergency room for evaluation.



**Call** Catawba County Animal Services at 828-465-8228. If after hours, call 911 and ask for animal control.



**Expect a Call** A communicable disease nurse from Catawba County Public Health will contact you to keep you informed.



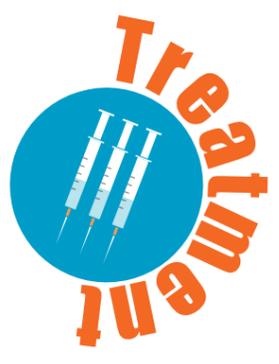
**Lab testing** Brain matter from animals suspected of having rabies is sent to the state laboratory for testing. Bites should be reported to the local health department and animal control so testing or confinement can begin.

Find out more about diagnosis at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/diagnosis/index.html>

## Can a person be treated after a bite or scratch?

**YES.** If a person may have been exposed to rabies, a treatment called PEP (post-exposure rabies prophylaxis) will be recommended. It consists of a series of shots over a period of time.

**FOR HUMANS,** symptoms develop 3-8 weeks after exposure. Once they start, the disease is usually fatal.



## Have you seen a bat indoors?

**HAVE YOU SEEN A BAT INDOORS?** If you woke up with a bat in your room or suspect you have been bitten, contact Animal Services and your medical provider. Take the same precautions if you see a bat in a room with a child, or with an elderly, mentally impaired or intoxicated person.



Learn more about bats and rabies at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/>

## Could you spot the bite?

Bats' small teeth can make a bite difficult to spot. It can even be mistaken for pin pricks or a scratch.

## How exposure happens

**Rabies is spread when an infected animal's saliva or nervous system tissue comes in contact with a break in the skin. An example of this would be through a bite.**

## How to prevent bites

- » Don't let your pets interact with stray or wild animals.
- » Don't interact with wild animals by feeding or handling them.
- » Prevent wild animals from entering your home.
- » Make sure your pets' rabies vaccination is up to date. It's the law for owners of cats, dogs and ferrets.

## Animal symptoms: Do you know what to look for?

### SYMPTOMS

- » Loss of appetite
- » Irritability and unusual aggression, lack of fear and restlessness
- » Dilated pupils
- » Seizures, trembling and unsteadiness
- » Difficulty swallowing, drooling or foaming at the mouth



## Human symptoms

Once clinical signs of rabies appear, the disease is nearly always fatal. According to the CDC, less than 10 documented cases of human survival from clinical rabies have been reported. Of those, only two did not have a history of pre- or post-exposure prophylaxis.

**THE FIRST SYMPTOMS** of rabies may be very similar to those of the flu including general weakness or discomfort, fever, or headache. These symptoms may last for days.

There may be also discomfort or a prickling or itching sensation at the site of bite, progressing within days to symptoms of cerebral dysfunction, anxiety, confusion, agitation.

As the disease progresses, the person may experience delirium, abnormal behavior, hallucinations, and insomnia.

The acute period of disease typically ends after 2 to 10 days.



**GO TO** [www.catawbacountync.gov/animal/rabies.asp](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/animal/rabies.asp) for information on efforts to control rabies in Catawba County.

**FIND OUT** more at [www.cdc.gov/rabies/](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/)

**To find out when and where to get rabies vaccinations for pets, contact:**

**Catawba County Animal Services**  
(828) 465-8228

[jyoung@catawbacountync.gov](mailto:jyoung@catawbacountync.gov)

201 Government Services Drive  
Newton, NC 28658

## Teach children about rabies

Let your children learn about rabies at [www.cdc.gov/rabiesandkids/](http://www.cdc.gov/rabiesandkids/).



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Catawba County Animal Services

**Have questions? Contact a communicable disease nurse from Catawba County Public Health at (828) 695-5800.**

Leading the Way to a Healthier Community

