

# A Healthier You

## Rabies Prevention



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

### What is Rabies?

Rabies is a disease caused by a virus that affects the brain. Rabies is usually passed from animal to animal but it can be passed from animals to people. Any warm-blooded animal with fur can get rabies. This includes humans, as well as pets such as cats and dogs. Rabies can affect farm animals like cows and horses and wild animals like foxes, skunks, groundhogs, raccoons and bats.



Be careful of all animals that you do not know. If you see a stray dog or cat, don't pet it. And if any animal is acting strangely, call your local animal control officer for help.

### What is the Risk for my Pet?

Any animal bitten or scratched by a wild animal or a bat, or even by a stray dog or cat that is not available for testing should be regarded as having been exposed to rabies.

### How Do I Know if an Animal Has Rabies?

Animals with rabies may act differently than normal. Some animals may act mad when they have rabies. They will be hostile and may try to bite people or other animals. In movies, animals with rabies look like they are foaming at the mouth. What's really happening is that the rabies makes them have more saliva and that makes them drool.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that **unvaccinated** dogs, cats, and ferrets exposed to a rabid animal should be euthanized immediately. If the owner is unwilling to have this done, the animal is required to be placed in strict isolation for 6 months and vaccinated 1 month before being released.

**Other animals may act timid or shy when they have rabies. This is the most common type of rabies.** A wild animal might move slowly or act tame. Someone might be able to easily get close to it. Since that's not the way wild animals usually act, keep in mind that something could be wrong.



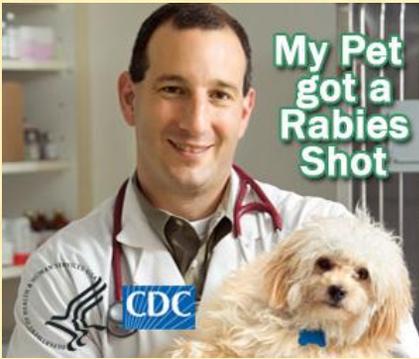
Exposed pets with expired vaccinations need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Dogs and cats that are currently vaccinated are kept under observation for 45 days.

The best thing to do is to **never feed or approach an unknown animal.** Even homeless puppies and kittens can carry rabies and give it to you or your pet.



Small mammals such as squirrels, rats, mice, hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils, chipmunks, rabbits, and hares are almost never found to be infected with rabies in the U.S. Bites by these animals are usually not considered a risk of rabies unless the animal was sick or behaving in any unusual manner and rabies is widespread in your area.





## What is the Risk to Me and My Family?

Pets such as dogs, cats and rabbits and wild animals, such as skunks, raccoons, and bats, are able to transfer the rabies virus to humans via bites and/or scratches.

***Rabies is serious, and can be deadly.***

However, **rabies in humans is 100% preventable through prompt and appropriate medical care.**

If someone is bitten or scratched by **any** animal, wash the wound with soap and water for at least five minutes, and then go see your doctor right away. In people, it may take one, two, or even three months to show signs of rabies. If there's a chance the animal has rabies, your doctor will want to give you the rabies vaccine to make sure you don't get rabies, too.

## How Can Rabies be Prevented?

Everyone can take simple steps to help prevent rabies:

- Vaccinate your dogs, cats and ferrets against rabies;
- Keep your pets under your supervision so they don't catch rabies from a wild animal;

- Don't handle wild animals and if you see one acting strangely, call the local animal control officer;
- Don't pet, feed or bring home stray dogs, cats, puppies or kittens -- call your local animal control officer for assistance.
- Spay or neuter pets so they'll be more likely to stay home.



## Looking for More Information?

- ❖ Speak to your veterinarian or health care provider
- ❖ Visit Somerset County Department of Health's website at [www.co.somerset.nj.us/health](http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/health) -or-
- ❖ The New Jersey Department of Health at <http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/rabies/>
- ❖ Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-CDC-INFO or search for information at <http://www.cdc.gov/Rabies>

