DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Rabies

Rabies is a fatal but preventable disease caused by the rabies virus, which only infects mammals. The virus is spread by the saliva of an infected animal, typically through a bite, or if infected saliva enters an open cut or touches the eyes, nose or mouth. If left untreated, the disease is fatal. Pets and livestock can be protected by routine vaccination. People can be protected after bites or exposures by preventative vaccine treatment.

Which animals are most likely to have rabies in Minnesota?

Skunks and bats are the wild animals most likely to test positive for rabies in Minnesota. People in Minnesota are generally exposed to rabies by:

- bats
- dogs
- cats
- livestock

Hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils, rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, rats and mice are not considered a rabies risk in Minnesota. These animals are unlikely to survive an attack by a rabid skunk or other rabid animal long enough to become infected and transmit rabies.

What do I need to know about bats and rabies?

Most human cases of rabies in the United States result from bat bites. Bat teeth are tiny, and bites can go unrecognized. If there is any chance that someone has had physical contact with a bat, the bat should be captured and tested for rabies. These situations include finding a bat in the room of an unattended child or vulnerable adult or waking up to find a bat in the room where a person has been sleeping.

What should I do if someone is bitten by an animal?

- Wash the bite immediately with soap and water.
- Visit your healthcare provider so they can assess the need for rabies vaccinations, tetanus boosters or antibiotics.
- Get the animal owner's name, telephone number, and the rabies vaccination status of the animal.
    - In most cases, a domestic animal that bites a person can be confined and observed for 10 days to ensure they didn't transmit rabies at the time of the bite.
- Wild animals that bite people should be euthanized and tested for rabies if they can be captured. Wild animals cannot be confined and observed.
- Call the Minnesota Department of Health at 651- 201-5414 for advice about bat contact or animal bites.

Learn more by visiting the State of Minnesota's website, Rabies - MN Dept. of Health, health.state.mn.us/rabies or scan the following QR code:

How can rabies be prevented?

- Be sure to vaccinate your pets against rabies. Vaccination is also available for horses, cattle and sheep. Vaccinated pets and livestock prevent the spread of disease between wildlife and people.
- Teach children not to approach unfamiliar pets or wild animals and encourage them to tell an adult if they are bitten.
- Never leave infants or young children alone with any animal.
- Do not try to rescue wildlife yourself. If you find a wild animal that may be injured or orphaned, contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator or your local animal control agency for help.
- Don't keep wild animals as pets.
- Avoid animals behaving abnormally.

The rabies virus cannot survive outside an animal - it dies quickly when exposed to UV light or air. For this reason, the environment and objects the animal may have touched cannot be contaminated with the rabies virus.

Seek medical advice or call MDH at 651-201-5414 anytime someone has been bitten by an animal, has had direct contact with a bat, or woken up to a bat in their room.

What is Rabies Post Exposure Prophylaxis, or PEP?

If it was possible you were exposed to rabies, rabies post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) will be recommended. This consists of one dose of human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) and four rabies vaccinations given over two weeks. These are usually given in the arm.

Day 0 (first day of healthcare)	Day 3	Day 7	Day 14
Rabies Vaccine #1 Human Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG)	Rabies Vaccine #2	Rabies Vaccine #3	Rabies Vaccine #4

What should I do if a wild animal bites my pet?

Call your veterinarian, or the Minnesota Board of Animal Health at 651-201-6808. If your community has an animal control officer, contact them for assistance in capturing the animal for rabies testing.

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.