

# rabies

## what is it?

### How is rabies spread?

When an animal is sick with rabies, the virus is shed in the saliva and can be passed to another animal or a person, usually through a bite. Transmission may also occur if this saliva or the animal's nervous tissue enters open wounds, the mouth, nose or eyes of another animal or person.

### Which animals have been reported with rabies in Florida?

Since the 1980s, rabid cats were reported more frequently than rabid dogs. Rabid bobcats, skunks, otters, horses, cattle and ferrets have also been reported. Raccoons have been reported most frequently followed by bats and foxes.



### What do rabid animals look like?

Animals with rabies may show strange behavior—they can be aggressive, attacking for no apparent reason, or act very tame (especially wild animals). They may not be able to eat, drink or swallow. They may drool because they have difficulty swallowing. They may stagger or become paralyzed. Rabies will kill most animals.

### Tips that may prevent or stop a dog attack

- Don't run past a dog. Dogs naturally love to chase and catch things. Don't give them a reason to become excited/aggressive until the dog is out of sight. Don't turn and run.
- If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck. Protect your face.
- Never disturb a dog that's caring for puppies, sleeping or eating
- If a dog approaches to sniff you, stay still. In most cases, the dog will go away when it determines you're not a threat.
- If you're threatened by a dog, remain calm. Don't scream. If you say anything speak calmly and firmly. Avoid eye contact. Try to stay still until the dog leaves, or back away slowly



For more information please call:



Animal Services  
305-884-1101



305-470-5660

## what you should know about rabies



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## What do I do to protect myself, my family and my pets from rabies?

- Have your veterinarian vaccinate all of your dogs, cats, ferrets and horses against rabies, and make sure you follow your veterinarian's instructions for revaccination.
- Avoid contact with wild or stray animals.
- Never feed wild or stray animals—avoid attracting them with outdoor food sources (like uncovered trash). Feed your pets indoors.
- Do not allow your pets to run free. Follow leash laws by keeping pets and livestock secured on your property.
- Support animal control in your community.



## What do I do if an animal bites me?

- Immediately scrub the wound with lots of soap and running water for five to ten minutes.
- Try to get a complete description of the animal and determine where it is so that it can be picked up by animal control staff for quarantine or rabies testing.
- Go to your family doctor or the nearest emergency room.
- Call your county health department or animal control agency with the animal's description and location. The animal will either be quarantined for ten days (if it is a dog, cat or ferret) or be tested for rabies.



## What are the signs and symptoms of rabies in humans?

- It takes approximately 3-8 weeks to develop symptoms from rabies.
- 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.

## What is the risk for my pet?

- If your animal is attacked by a wild, stray or unvaccinated animal, DO NOT examine your pet for injuries without wearing gloves. Wash your pet with soap and water to remove saliva from the attacking animal. Do not let your animal come into contact with other animals or people until the situation can be dealt with by animal control or county health department staff.
- Any animal bitten or scratched by either a wild, carnivorous mammal or a bat that is not available for testing should be regarded as having been exposed to rabies.
- 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 should be placed in strict isolation for 6 months and vaccinated 1 month before being released.

