

Rabies

What is rabies?

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that can infect all mammals (warm blooded animals) including humans. The rabies virus infects the central nervous system, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death.

What animals get rabies?

All mammals (warm blooded animals) can get rabies. Animals in Iowa are infected with rabies every year; some animals are more likely to be infected than others. For example, wild animals (especially skunks and bats) most often get rabies. All domestic animals (such as dogs, cats, horses, and cattle) can be infected. Rodents (such as squirrels, hamsters, and mice) and rabbits very rarely get rabies.

How do you get rabies?

Anyone can get rabies after exposure to a rabid animal. Rabies is spread when the virus from the animal's saliva (mouth)/neural tissue gets through a person's skin via bites or contact to wounds or contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth.

In addition, people found in rooms with bats, that are unable to state, "I know I was not bitten," may have been exposed to rabies. This would include persons who awaken to find a bat in the room or children alone with a bat in a room.

What should you do if you are exposed to a rabid animal?

Immediately wash the site of exposure (such as the bite or wound) thoroughly with soap and water. Contact your health care provider to discuss whether you need rabies shots.

How can rabies be prevented?

- Vaccination of pets against rabies is the best way to reduce human exposure.
- Avoid contact with all wild animals.
- Do not keep wild animals as pets.
- Control of stray animals can decrease both animal and human exposure to rabies.

For more information:

- <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/CADE/DiseaseIndex.aspx?disease=Rabies>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies>



source: istockphoto.com

For further questions call:
During business hours: **800-362-2736**
After hours: **515-323-4360**



Iowa Department of Public Health,
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)

<http://www.idph.state.ia.us/CADE/DiseaseIndex.aspx?disease=Rabies>
<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies>



<http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu>