

What is Rabies?

Rabies is a very rare but serious disease transmitted from animals to people caused by the rabies virus. The virus infects the brain and nervous system of mammals. It is fatal if left untreated.

DISTRIBUTION



In BC, bats are the only animal that carry the rabies virus. Only a small proportion of bats in BC (about 1/200) are infected with rabies.



In other parts of Canada, strains of the rabies virus may be found in wild animals such as bats, raccoons, skunks, red foxes and



Dog bites cause most human rabies in developing countries. Most cases occur in Africa

TRANSMISSION

Rabies is transmitted by the bite or scratch of an infected mammal

Any mammal, including humans, can become infected with rabies!

RESOURCES

BCCDC Rabies Information

www.bccdc.ca/rabies
604-707-2400

HealthLink BC Rabies Page

www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile07.stm

BC Community Bat Program

www.bcbats.ca/

BC Wildlife Veterinarian

250-953-4285

Conservation Officer Service
Report All Poachers and Polluters
1-877-952-7277 (RAPP)

Local Public Health Office Finder

www.immunizebc.ca/finder



BC CENTRE FOR DISEASE
CONTROL (BCCDC)

RABIES IN BC

Risk to You and Your Pet



BC Centre for Disease Control
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

May, 2015

RABIES IN PEOPLE

If you are bitten or scratched by a possibly rabid animal (e.g. bat):

- Immediately wash wound with soap and
- Seek medical attention:
 - *Although rabies infection is rare, possible infection must be assessed by a healthcare provider due to its severity*
- If treatment is received in time, rabies (in humans) can be prevented



Two medications are given to prevent rabies:

- One dose of rabies immune globulin to neutralize the virus
- Four doses of rabies vaccine over 14 days to help your immune system make antibodies

Symptoms of rabies in people:

Symptoms generally appear 3-8 weeks after exposure but could take several years. They include:

- headache
- fever
- difficulty swallowing
- excessive drooling
- muscle spasm or weakness
- strange behaviour
- death

RABIES IN ANIMALS



If your pet is bitten by or bites a possibly rabid animal (e.g. bat):

- Take your pet to your veterinarian
- The veterinarian will give your pet a vaccine to help prevent rabies
- If the bat or other potentially rabid animal is available, your vet may send it for rabies testing
- A quarantine period may be necessary to monitor your pet for possible infection
- Your pet is only at risk of transmitting rabies if it is showing signs of the disease or in the few days before it shows signs

Signs of rabies in animals:

- There are two forms of rabies in animals:
 - **Furious:** animal is aggressive
 - **Dumb:** animal is lethargic
- Bats usually show the dumb form, including daytime appearances and loss of flight ability

If you find a wild animal showing these signs:

- Do not touch the animal

MANAGING BATS

Bats in the environment:

- Never touch a bat with bare hands
- If a dead bat is found away from populated areas, contact the BC wildlife veterinarian (see reverse)



Bats in your home:

- To have bats removed from your home, contact the BC Community Bat Program (see reverse)
- If there is a dead bat on your property, visit the BCCDC rabies webpage for safe instructions on how to manage the bat (see reverse)

The importance of bats:

- Bats play an essential role in BC's ecosystem
- All species of bats found in BC eat insects, which helps control their population
- Bats should be left undisturbed unless there is a suspicion of rabies exposure or other harm