

## RABIES IN HUMBOLDT COUNTY

### WHAT IS RABIES?

Rabies is a contagious and fatal disease caused by a virus that people can get from infected wildlife such as skunks, foxes, and bats. People can also get rabies from dogs, cats, and livestock.

Biting is the most common method of infection from one animal to another or from an animal to a human. The virus can also enter the body from saliva contact with a mucus membrane or an open wound.

### IS THERE RABIES IN HUMBOLDT COUNTY?

**Absolutely!** Every year, the Public Health Laboratory tests approximately 100 animals from all areas of the county. A few animals test positive each year.

#### From 1955 - 2011, 399 animals have tested positive in Humboldt County:

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|--------------|-------------|
| ✓ 164 skunks | ✓ 8 dogs    |
| ✓ 122 foxes  | ✓ 5 horses  |
| ✓ 34 cows    | ✓ 1 coyote  |
| ✓ 49 bats    | ✓ 1 opossum |
| ✓ 14 cats    | ✓ 1 bobcat  |



### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF RABIES IN ANIMALS?

The classic symptom of rabies is abnormal behavior – nocturnal animals seen in daylight; normally shy animals that act aggressive or aggressive animals that act friendly.

Symptoms in a domestic animal may also include:

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|---|---|
| • Irritability/restlessness                             | • Bites objects to the point of self-injury |
| • Exaggerated response to bright light or loud noise    | • Loss of sensation of physical pain        |
| • Snapping at insects or imaginary objects              | • Difficulty in swallowing                  |
| • Depraved appetite (eating rocks, sticks, feces, etc.) | • Paralysis                                 |

**Note: It is possible for an animal to be infectious with rabies and show no outward symptoms.**

### WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PET HAS HAD CONTACT WITH A POSSIBLE RABID ANIMAL

If your pet has had contact with a wild animal, and the wild animal is dead and available for testing, the Humboldt County Public Health Branch Laboratory will test the brain for rabies.

If the wild animal tests positive for rabies, a 30-day quarantine is required if your pet is vaccinated. A six-month, double-enclosure, "no touch" quarantine is required if your pet does not have a current rabies vaccination.

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE HAD CONTACT WITH A SUSPECTED RABID ANIMAL

Contact your physician. If the animal is dead and available for testing, the Public Health Laboratory will test it for rabies. **Testing is arranged by contacting the Division of Environmental Health at (707) 445-6215.**

If the animal is unavailable for testing, the decision for post-exposure treatment is between the person and their physician.

**Public Health Branch Nursing is available to answer questions about the risk of rabies and treatment options.  
Call (707) 445-6200.**

## **WHAT TO DO IF A PERSON IS BITTEN BY A CAT OR DOG**

By law, a biting cat or dog must be quarantined for 10 days regardless of the rabies vaccination status.

Contact your local Animal Control Agency to report dog or cat bites.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF - AND OTHERS - FROM RABIES**

1. **HAVE YOUR PET DOGS AND CATS VACCINATED FOR RABIES.** Cats are now the most frequently reported domestic rabid animal in the United States.
2. **DO NOT FEED WILDLIFE AROUND YOUR HOME, INTENTIONALLY OR ACCIDENTALLY** (by leaving food out at night). If you feed raccoons/skunks at the same time, sooner or later a bite is going to occur to pets (yours or someone else's) or people.
3. **STAY AWAY FROM WILD ANIMALS AND STRAY DOGS/CATS.**
4. **IF A DOMESTIC OR WILD ANIMAL BITES YOU, SEEK MEDICAL TREATMENT.**

