

Rabies FAQ Sheet

Information provided by Harris County Public Health (HCPH) Veterinary Public Health
612 Canino Rd. Houston, TX 77076 281-999-3191

www.hcphtx.org or www.countypets.com



What is it?

Rabies is a virus that attacks the central nervous system. It can be transmitted by the bite of a rabid animal or through a scratch with the saliva of a rabid animal in it.

What animals get rabies?

All warm - blooded animals, including humans, can get rabies. Dogs, cats, and livestock usually get rabies from wild animals. In Texas, the **5 high risk** wild animals are **bats, skunks, raccoons, foxes, and coyotes**.

How is rabies spread?

A common pattern is for a rabid wild animal to bite and infect a dog or cat, which could be the family pet. The disease develops in the pet animal and they bite and transfer the infection to other pets and perhaps humans. **Children are most often the human victims**, because of their closer association with pets and other animals.

How serious is rabies?

Rabies is a serious, deadly disease. It can take from 14 days up to 18 months for rabies to incubate. After the incubation period, the clinical signs begin. In the furious variety, the animal is very irritable and will snap and bite at real or imaginary objects. The animal usually becomes paralyzed and dies shortly after. Also animals may have “dumb” rabies, which causes drowsiness and the animals’ lower jaw to become paralyzed. **After the clinical signs, animals may die within three to ten days.**



What you should do:

- ◆ Maintain current rabies vaccinations on all dogs and cats four months of age and older. Check with your veterinarian.
- ◆ Confine all pets or keep them on a leash.
- ◆ All persons, especially children, should be warned to avoid all sick or injured animals.
- ◆ All stray or wild animals should be avoided, particularly skunks and bats observed during the day.
- ◆ Report all animal bites or scratches that break the skin, or any physical contact with a bat, to your area animal control agency.
- ◆ Report loose animals to HCPH Veterinary Public Health or your local animal control.

Wild animals involved in attacks or close contact with humans may need to be tested for rabies.

Residents in unincorporated Harris County should contact HCPH Veterinary Public Health at 281-999-3191 as soon as possible.

Residents within the city limits of Houston should contact the Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care (BARC) 713-238-9600.