

RABIES PREVENTION



WHAT IS RABIES?

Rabies is a deadly virus affecting the nervous system of mammals, including humans. It is usually transmitted through the bite or scratch of an infected animal. In Massachusetts, common carriers include bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes.

HOW IS RABIES SPREAD?

The rabies virus is found in the saliva and brain tissue of infected animals and can be transmitted through bites, scratches, and open wounds or mucous membranes exposed to infected saliva.

PROTECTING YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

Avoid wild animals, especially those that appear sick or unusually friendly. Secure your home by ensuring garbage containers have tight-fitting lids, not leaving pet food outside, and removing any potential food sources that attract wild animals. Teach children to avoid wild animals and report any bites or scratches immediately.

SYMPTOMS OF RABIES

ANIMALS	HUMANS
Aggressiveness	Fever
Excessive drooling	Headache
Difficulty swallowing	General weakness or discomfort
Unusual behavior	Anxiety
Paralysis	Insomnia
Vocalization changes	Confusion
Nocturnal animals being active during the day	Other neurological symptoms such as hallucinations

WHAT TO DO IF EXPOSED

PET EXPOSURE

- If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, contact your veterinarian immediately.
- Vaccinated pets should receive a booster dose of the rabies vaccine.
- Unvaccinated pets may need to be quarantined or, in some cases, euthanized.

HUMAN EXPOSURE

- Immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water.
- Seek medical attention right away.
- Contact a healthcare provider for further evaluation and potential post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).

PREVENTION MEASURES

Do not feed or handle wild animals.

Securely close garbage cans to avoid attracting wild animals.

Report stray animals to animal control.

Keep your yard clean and free of debris that might attract wildlife.

Do not leave pet food, bird seed, or other food outside that can attract wild animals.

VACCINATION IS KEY

Ensure your pets are up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations, and vaccinate valuable livestock, such as horses. Keeping cats indoors and dogs on a leash or within a fenced yard significantly reduces the risk of exposure.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can you get rabies without being bit?

Rabies is primarily transmitted through bites. It can also spread if infected saliva gets into open wounds or mucous membranes.

What are the chances of survival after exposure?

With prompt and appropriate medical care, including post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), the chances of survival are excellent.

Without treatment, rabies is almost always fatal.

Can I vaccinate my own pet(s) for rabies?

In Massachusetts, rabies vaccinations must be administered by a licensed veterinarian.

REPORTING AND ASSISTANCE

- Report sick or strange-acting wildlife to the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game at (508) 389-6300.
- Any animal bites should be reported to local animal control, and medical advice should be sought immediately.

Animal Control Contacts

- Bedford: (781) 275-1212
- Carlisle: (978) 369-1155
- Concord: (978) 318-3275
- Lincoln: (781) 259-8113
- Sudbury: (978) 440-5471
- Wayland: (508) 358-4747
- Weston: (781) 786-6200

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Massachusetts Department of Public Health:
www.mass.gov/rabies

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/rabies

World Health Organization (WHO):
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/rabies>

*Stay informed, stay safe,
and protect your community from rabies!*