



World Rabies Day September 28 – Share the Message, Save a Life

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MADISON – In observance of World Rabies Day on September 28, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) reminds pet owners, those who interact with animals, and parents for how to prevent rabies.

“Rabies is a preventable disease through vaccination,” said Dr. Yvonne Bellay, DATCP humane program veterinarian for the Division of Animal Health. “Vaccination for pets should be done any time after around three months of age and then again one year later. After these two shots your veterinarian will develop a vaccination plan for your pet that complies with local laws.”

How to Prevent Rabies

You can help prevent rabies through the following steps:

- Vaccinate your pet.
 - Pets who have not received a rabies shot and come into contact with a potentially rabid wild animal may need to be quarantined or euthanized.
 - Pet owners should also be aware of the cost and legal implications of a [dog or cat bite](#). Whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, a dog or cat bite requires the animal be quarantined for 10 days and have three veterinarian examinations. For an unvaccinated cat or dog an additional cost of an isolation facility is needed for the 10-day quarantine and a rabies vaccination. These costs are covered by the animal owner.
- Enjoy wildlife from a distance.
- Cover garbage cans securely and do not leave pet food outside.
- Keep your pets indoors.
 - Walk your pet on a leash or keep it in a fenced yard.
 - Pets kept indoors should still be vaccinated. Every year indoor-only cats still develop rabies because of bats in the home.
- Prevent bats from entering your home. If you find a bat in your home, follow these [instructions to safely catch the bat](#).

These steps are also provided in a [coloring book](#) for parents to teach their children how to protect against and prevent rabies exposure. With news stories across the nation of children bringing bats to school, parents should help children understand that it is never safe to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.

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Rabies Basics

Rabies is a viral disease that affects the central nervous system. It is transmitted from infected animals to other animals and humans. The exposure is nearly always through a bite, but rabies can also be transmitted if a rabid animal scratches a person or if its saliva comes into contact with broken skin. All mammals are susceptible to rabies. In Wisconsin, skunks and bats are the most likely animals to carry the rabies virus, although rabies also has occurred sporadically in dogs, cats, foxes, raccoons, and livestock.

Signs of Rabies

Signs of rabies in animals may include fearfulness, aggression, excessive drooling, difficulty swallowing, staggering, paralysis, and seizures. Aggressive behavior is common, but rabid animals may also be uncharacteristically affectionate. Horses and livestock with rabies also may exhibit depression, self-mutilation, or increased sensitivity to light. Rabid wild animals may lose their natural fear of humans and display unusual behavior, such as an animal that is usually only seen at night may be seen in the daytime. Rabies infection of an animal can only be confirmed after death, through microscopic examination of the animal's brain.

More Information

World Rabies Day is a global health observance started in 2007 to raise awareness about rabies to enhance prevention and control efforts of the disease.

DATCP's Division of Animal Health monitors animal health and disease threats, promotes humane treatment of animals, and provides licensing and registration regulation for animals in Wisconsin. For more information about rabies visit [DATCP's website](#).

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