



## Wisconsin offers children's coloring book as part of worldwide effort to control spread of rabies virus

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MADISON – In observance of World Rabies Day tomorrow, state animal health officials offer a downloadable coloring book illustrating rabies prevention to ensure the effort to control rabies doesn't last just one day. Parents are encouraged to go through the coloring book with their children since half of the people who die from rabies worldwide are under the age of 15, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

"The coloring book helps to remind Wisconsin residents of the many ways they can protect themselves and their pets against rabies," said Yvonne Bellay, DVM at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection. "Vaccination is one method that not only protects the animal, but also serves as a buffer to protect people who live in close contact with their animals."

The coloring book, which is available for download at [datcp.wi.gov](http://datcp.wi.gov), explains that rabies is a highly infectious and deadly viral disease that attacks the central nervous system. In humans, the disease is preventable by administering the proper post-exposure treatment as soon as a bite takes place.

Wisconsin has only seen four cases of rabies in humans since 1959, the most recent of which was in 2010. All four cases involved infection by rabid bats. Bats and skunks account for the majority of confirmed rabid animals in Wisconsin and cats are the most common rabid domestic animal reported here.

"Wisconsin state law does not require vaccination of cats for rabies, but many municipalities require it. Cats are more vulnerable to rabies exposure, especially if they are outdoor cats because they tend to hunt and roam extensively," Bellay says.

Some of the other steps that are featured in the coloring book to help protect yourself and your pets from rabies include:

- Enjoy wildlife from a distance.
- Do not let pets roam free. Always walk them on a leash or keep them in a fenced yard.
- Cover garbage cans securely and do not store pet food bags outside to attract wildlife.
- Prevent bats from entering your home.
- Provide bat houses as an alternative nesting location.

Pet owners should also be aware of the legal implications of a dog or cat bite. Bites, especially those from unvaccinated animals, can be quite costly to the animal's owner. For example, an unvaccinated animal will be quarantined to an isolation facility for a 10-day period, examined by a veterinarian at least three times and given a rabies vaccination at the end.

"All the costs of the isolation facility, examinations and vaccination are covered by the animal's owner. So, it can add up quickly," Bellay says.

Worse yet, if an animal under quarantine exhibits signs of rabies, state law requires that the animal be humanely killed and the brain submitted for rabies testing. Euthanizing the animal rarely ends up happening in developed countries like the U.S., but it is still a possibility. Your veterinarian will recommend vaccination as necessary. Many clinics and humane societies also regularly offer low-cost vaccinations for dogs and cats.

For more information about rabies, visit [datcp.wi.gov](http://datcp.wi.gov) and select animal diseases. You can also connect with us on Twitter at [twitter.com/widatcp](https://twitter.com/widatcp) or Facebook at [facebook.com/widatcp](https://facebook.com/widatcp).