

# ***RABIES***

## **. . . and how it can be controlled**

Man and all warm-blooded animals are susceptible to rabies. Once rabies is contracted, there is no known satisfactory treatment.

The virus, which is present in saliva during a certain stage in the progress of the disease, is transmitted by biting or licking by an infected animal and enters the body through a break in the skin or mucous membrane.

Rabies virus attacks the central nervous system. It may take days to years (average 3 – 8 weeks) to develop. Exposed people can be made immune within this time by a series of vaccinations. Modern rabies vaccines are administered under the skin, but some people may still experience itching and redness from the shots.

Rabies in animals is confirmed by treating the brain with a fluorescent dye which attaches to the virus. Infected areas are then visible under the microscope.

Rabies is a disease of animals. It is transmitted to man directly from an infected wild animal or indirectly through a pet or a domestic animal.

Contrary to popular belief, rabies occurs in all seasons and in all sections of the country.



### **Watch out for –**

- Bold, “friendly” or “apparently tame” wild animals.
- Night animals, like skunks and fox, that are seen in the daytime.
- Pets that have difficulty walking, eating or drinking.
- Signs of excitement or viciousness in normally quiet animals.
- Animals that tear or scratch an old wound until it bleeds.
- Cattle that “strain” for long periods.

### **Rabid Animals**

In the early stages of rabies, the personality of pets may change. A normally friendly dog may stay alone, another may begin to seek more attention. Some animals scratch at the place the virus entered their bodies.

Later, symptoms follow a “furious” pattern, a “dumb” or “paralytic” pattern, or a combination of both.



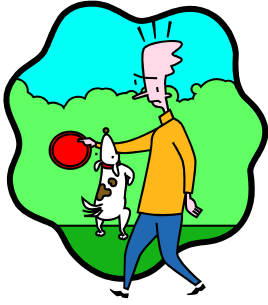
“Furious” symptoms include excitement, viciousness, roaming, unusual noises and a tendency to attack anything attracting the animal’s attention. Such animals may snap at anything, including themselves. They tend to “drool”, and their saliva may be mixed with blood. They may swallow objects such as stones and sticks. These symptoms progress to paralysis and eventual death.

“Dumb” symptoms include difficulty in chewing, swallowing, drinking or trouble walking. An animal may not be able to close its mouth. People have been exposed by trying to clear the throats of such animals, since they may seem to be choking. Paralysis spreads throughout the body until death. Parts paralyzed by rabies are limp, not rigid or stiff.

A veterinarian should be consulted immediately when any of these signs are first noted.

If bitten by an animal, treat the bites as if the animal were rabid, and follow these steps. They may save your life.

1. Identify the animal – by kind, size, color and place. Caution children to seek the help of a policeman, school guard or other adult.



2. Immediately cleanse the wound thoroughly by washing with soap and water for 15 minutes. Rinse well and disinfect with alcohol, iodine or other disinfectants. This lessens the chance of contracting rabies by removing or inactivating virus in the wound.
3. See a doctor immediately after washing the wound. The physician will decide on need for treatment to avoid contracting rabies.
4. Report the incident to Animal Services at 972.216.6283.
5. If possible, have the biting dog or cat placed under observation. If it is alive and normal after 10 days, the animal could not have transmitted rabies at the time of the bite. This will help the doctor determine whether the anti-rabies treatment is necessary. The observation period is not valid for livestock or wildlife since no information is available as to when live virus is excreted in the saliva of these animals. Bats are known to shed the virus in saliva for many months.

## Steps to community control of rabies

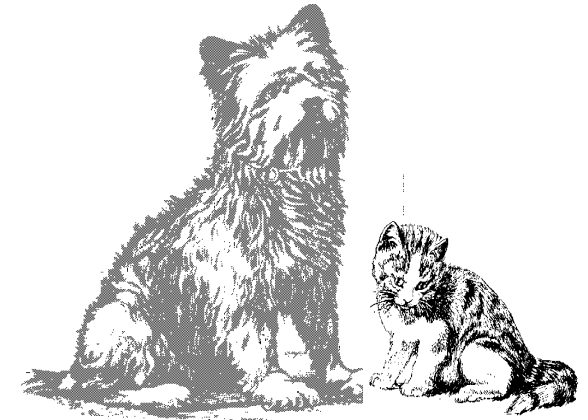
1. Register and license all owned dogs and cats.
2. Immunize all dogs and cats **annually or every three years if the three year rabies vaccine was used by your veterinarian.**
3. Impound all stray dogs. Provide animal services facilities and animal services personnel.
4. Quarantine all biting or scratching dogs and cats for daily observation for 10 days from the date of exposure.
5. Immediately destroy dogs and cats bitten by a known rabid animal. If the owner is unwilling to have this done, the unvaccinated animal shall be immediately vaccinated against rabies, placed in strict isolation for 90 days, and given booster vaccinations during the third and eighth weeks of isolation. If the animal is currently vaccinated against rabies, it should be revaccinated immediately and placed in strict isolation for 45 days.
6. Control wildlife cooperatively with health and conservation authorities.
7. Encourage others to understand and cooperate.

City of Mesquite Animal Services  
1650 Gross Road  
Mesquite, TX 75149  
972.216.6283

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**MESQUITE**  
T E X A S  
Real. Texas. Service.