

## RABIES PROGRAM

### The Clinton County Rabies Program

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system. The virus is present in saliva and nervous tissue of the rabid animal. The Center for Disease Control defines rabies as a preventable viral disease of mammals most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The vast majority of rabies cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) each year occur in wild animals like raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes. Domestic animals account for less than 10% of the reported rabies cases, with cats, cattle, and dogs most often reported rabid.

The Clinton County Health department provides education and services to the community, to assist in control and prevention of this deadly disease.

### What is Rabies?

Per the Center for Disease Control, rabies is a virus that infects the central nervous system, causing encephalopathy and ultimately death. Early symptoms of rabies in humans are nonspecific, consisting of fever, headache, and general malaise. As the disease progresses, neurological symptoms appear and may include insomnia, anxiety, confusion, slight or partial paralysis, excitation, hallucinations, agitation, hypersalivation, difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia (fear of water). Death usually occurs within days of the onset of symptoms.

### What Animals Can Get Rabies?

- Most frequently seen in wildlife such as raccoons, bats, skunks and foxes
- Pets and livestock can get rabies if they are not vaccinated
- Occasionally reported in deer and woodchucks
- Very rarely in rabbits and rodents (mice, squirrels, chipmunks, hamsters, etc.)
- Never in birds, snakes, fish, lizards or insects

All mammals, including humans, can be infected with rabies

## What Are The Signs Of Rabies?

- Change in behavior
- Staggering
- Convulsions
- Choking
- Frothing at the mouth
- Paralysis
- Most animals die within 1 week of showing signs of rabies

## How Do People Become Exposed to Rabies?

- Usually by being bitten by infected animal
- Scratches may also transmit rabies if contaminated with saliva
- Saliva from a rabid animal contacts mucous membranes or open wounds
- Bat Exposures Include situations where there is a reasonable probability that a bite, scratch or mucous membrane exposure occurred:
  - All bites, scratches, mucous membrane exposure
  - Direct skin contact
  - Sleeping person with bat in the same room
  - Adult finds a bat in a room or in close proximity to a young child, mentally disabled or intoxicated person

In all circumstances where there is any question about bat exposure **CAPTURE THE BAT** and call the local health department

## What Should I do if I am Exposed to Rabies?

Seek medical treatment immediately

Consult the Clinton County Health department with the details surrounding the animal and your exposure

## What can people do to protect themselves against rabies?

- Don't feed or handle wild or stray animals
- Vaccinate pets and livestock
- Don't attract wild animals to your property
- Teach children not to touch any animal they don't know
- Maintain buildings to keep bats out
- Report all bites or exposures to the Health Department

## Protect Your Pet From Rabies

Remember, your dog or cat can be vaccinated for rabies when it turns 3 months of age. One year after the first dose, your pet requires a booster, which is then good for three years. For the rest of your pet's life, it should have a booster shot every three years.

## What Services Are Available?

Investigate animal (mammal) bites and exposures (to determine if a person was exposed to rabies).

Arrange rabies testing for animals.

Oral vaccination program for wildlife.

Organize Rabies Clinic Schedules.

Investigate bat exposure.

Send Bat Proofing Techniques to homeowners.

Provide educational material to the public.

## How Much Does it Cost?

All services are free to Clinton County residents

## Contact Us

NOTE: All animal bites need to be reported, no matter how minor.

To receive more information, or report any animal bite, call or visit us at:

Clinton County Health Department

Environmental Unit

135 Margaret Street

Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Tel: (518) 565-4870

Fax: (518) 565-4843