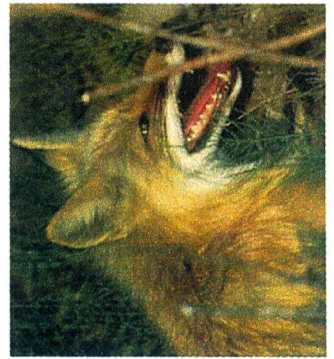


## BATS AND RABIES

- Most of the recent human rabies cases in the United States have been caused by rabies virus from bats. Any bat that is active by day, is found in a place where bats are not usually seen, or is unable to fly, is far more likely than others to be rabid. Therefore, it is best **not** to handle bats.



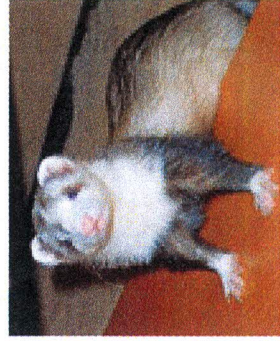
- You may not know you have been bitten by a bat. Their teeth are small and very sharp. Therefore, if you awaken and find a bat in your room, see a bat in the room of an unattended child, or see a bat near a mentally impaired or intoxicated person, do not destroy or throw away the bat. Call your local health department's environmental health office on how to have the bat tested and whether anyone needs medical care.



Red Fox

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP CONTROL RABIES?

- Have your veterinarian vaccinate your dogs, cats, ferrets, and selected livestock. Keep the vaccinations up-to-date.
- If your pet is attacked or bitten by a wild animal, report it to the local health or animal control authorities. Be sure your vaccinated dog, cat, or ferret receives a booster vaccination.
- Limit the possibility of exposure by keeping your animals on your property. **Don't** let pets roam free. Also, **don't** leave garbage or pet food outside. It will attract wild or stray animals.
- Remember**.....wild animals should **not** be kept as pets. They are a potential rabies threat to their owners and to others. Enjoy all wild animals from a distance, **especially if they seem friendly**. A rabid animal sometimes acts tame. If you see an animal acting strangely, report it to the city or county animal control department. **Don't go near it yourself**.
- Remember, wildlife is a part of our natural heritage. Enjoy it, respect it...at a distance for the benefit of all concerned.
- For more information, contact your local health department or visit the following website:  
[www.nghd.org](http://www.nghd.org)



Ferret



North Georgia Health District

## WHAT YOU SHOULD

## KNOW ABOUT

# RABIES AND ANIMAL BITES



RABID? Coyote

North Georgia Health District  
706-272-2342

County Environmental Health Offices:

Cherokee County: 770-479-0444

Fannin County: 706-632-3024

Gilmer County: 706-253-6050

Murray County: 706-695-0266 (ext. 371)

Pickens County: 706-253-0900

Whitfield County: 706-272-2005



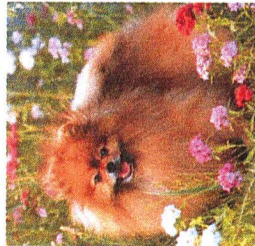
## WHAT IF I AM BITTEN?

- **Don't panic**, but don't ignore the bite. Wash the wound thoroughly and vigorously with soap and lots of water.
- Call your physician immediately and explain how you were bitten. Follow the doctor's advice.
- If possible, confine or capture the animal under a large box or container if that can be done safely. Once captured, **don't** try to pick up the animal. Call the local animal control authorities to collect it. If the animal cannot be captured, try to memorize its appearance [size, color, etc.] and where it went after biting you.
- If it is a wild animal, only try to capture it if you can do so without getting bitten again. If the animal cannot be contained and must be killed to prevent its escape, do so without damaging the head. The brain will be needed to test for rabies.
- Report the bite to the local health department. Prompt and appropriate treatment after being bitten and before the disease develops can stop the infection and prevent the disease.



## WHAT IF MY PET HAS BITTEN SOMEONE?

- Urge the victim to see a physician immediately and to follow the physician's recommendations.
- Check with your veterinarian to determine if your pet's vaccinations are up-to-date.
- Report the bite to the local health department's environmental health office and animal control authorities. If your pet is a cat, dog or ferret, the officials will confine the animal and watch it closely for ten days. Home confinement may be allowed, if vaccinated.
- Immediately report any illness or unusual behavior by your pet to the local health department's environmental health office and to your veterinarian.
- After the recommended observation period, have your pet vaccinated for rabies if its vaccination is not current.



## WHAT IS RABIES?

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. The virus is secreted in saliva and is usually transmitted to people and animals by a bite from an infected animal. Less commonly, rabies can be transmitted when saliva from a rabid animal comes into contact with an open cut on the skin or the eyes, nose, or mouth of a person or animal. Once the outward signs of the disease appear, rabies is nearly always fatal.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF RABIES?

Once the rabies virus enters the body, it travels along the nerves to the brain. Dogs, cats, and ferrets with rabies may show a variety of signs, including fearfulness, aggression, excessive drooling, difficulty swallowing, staggering, and seizures. Rabid wild animals may only display unusual behavior; for example, an animal that is usually only seen at night may be seen wandering in the daytime. In addition to those signs seen in dogs and cats, horses, cattle, sheep, and goats with rabies may also exhibit depression, self mutilation, or increased sensitivity to light.

## WHAT IF MY PET HAS BEEN BITTEN BY A SUSPECTED RABID ANIMAL?

- Consult your veterinarian immediately and report the bite to local animal control authorities and the environmental health office.
- Even if your dog, cat or ferret has a current vaccination, it should be revaccinated immediately, kept under the owner's control, and observed for a period as specified by state law or local ordinance (normally 45 days or more). Animals with expired vaccinations will need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- Dogs, cats and ferrets that have never been vaccinated and are exposed to a rabid animal may need to be euthanized or placed in strict isolation for six months.
- Animals other than dogs, cats, and ferrets that are bitten by a rabid or potentially rabid animal may need to be euthanized immediately.

## WHAT ANIMALS CAN GET RABIES?

Only mammals can get rabies; birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians do not. Most cases of rabies occur in wild animals—mainly skunks, raccoons, bats, coyotes, and foxes. In recent years, cats have become the most common domestic animal infected with rabies. This is because many cat owners do not vaccinate their cats before the cats are exposed to rabid wildlife outdoors. Rabies also occurs in dogs and cattle in significant number and, while not as common, has been diagnosed in horses, goats, sheep, swine and ferrets.

Improved vaccination programs and control of stray animals have been effective in preventing rabies in most pets. Approved rabies vaccines are available for cats, dogs, ferrets, horses, cattle and sheep. Licensed oral vaccines have been used for mass immunization of wildlife.