

NORTHERN INTER-TRIBAL HEALTH AUTHORITY INC.



RABIES



What is Rabies?

Rabies is a life-threatening disease in people and animals caused by a virus, which infects the brain. Infected animals can pass rabies to people through their saliva, usually from a bite. In Saskatchewan, foxes, skunks and bats are the animals most likely to transmit rabies. Cats, dogs and other pets that have not had their rabies vaccination are at risk of being infected.

What are the symptoms of Rabies?

In people, infection begins with symptoms such as a fever, cough or sore throat. The disease rapidly progresses to symptoms such as restlessness, hallucinations and seizures. The final stage is coma and death.

In animals, signs may include drooling, problems swallowing or sometimes foaming at the mouth, and paralysis. Animals may act differently. Wild animals may move slowly or act as if they are tame. Pets that are usually friendly may snap at you or may try to bite.

How is Rabies Treated?

There is no cure for rabies. A series of needles can be given after an animal bite to help prevent rabies. If you have been bitten by a pet, the need to have the needles can be avoided by keeping the animal for observation for 10 days. Only if the animal becomes sick would you need vaccination urgently.

How Can Rabies Be Prevented?

CHILDREN SHOULD NEVER BE LEFT ALONE WITH ANY ANIMAL.

- Vaccinate your pets against rabies.
- Do not let your pets run loose. Keep your pets fenced or on a leash.

- Teach children NEVER to approach un-familiar pets, strays or wild animals.
- Teach children to avoid animals that are eating, caring for their babies or appear sick.

Are Some Bites Riskier Than Others?

Yes! Riskier bites or bites that require immediate attention are those considered Unprovoked. Unprovoked bites may be because the animal is not behaving normally and is sick. An Unprovoked bite might be from an attack for no reason or a bite from your own pet where the pet doesn't have a history of being aggressive.

Bites where an animal was acting like an animal and the human encouraged it to protect itself are considered less risky and are called Provoked bites. These might happen due:

- Beating an animal.
- Stepping on or bumping into an animal.
- Taking babies from their mother.
- Interfering in an animal fight.
- Trying to touch a frightened/injured animal.
- Entering a yard that is guarded by a dog.
- Feeding or getting too near an animal that is eating.
- Teasing an animal.
- Walking past an unfamiliar animal.
- Riding on an animal.
- Pulling an animal's ears or tail.
- Making loud noise such as riding a ski doo or playing loud music or children playing loudly.

What Should You Do If You Have Been Bitten?

Any Animal That Has Bitten Should Be Kept Alive And Watched For 10 Days

- Let the area bleed and then wash with soap and water. Do not kill the animal.
- If the animal must be killed, do not shoot it in the head because the brain will be needed for testing to see if the animal had rabies. If possible, hold the animal for observation for 10 days. If the animal has rabies it will die within 10 days. If the animal lives, it does not have rabies and the needles are not needed.
- Get as much information about the animal as possible ... Who owns the animal? Where is the animal? Was this a provoked attack?
- See your Community Health Nurse or a Doctor if the bite wound is bad, painful or seems infected (hot to the touch and very red).