

Rabies Fact Sheet

The rabies virus is transmitted through saliva or brain/nervous system tissue of mammals. It is almost always fatal in humans. Common carriers of rabies in the U.S. include raccoons, bats, skunks, and foxes. Domestic animals, such as cats and dogs, may also be carriers, especially stray animals or in international locations where vaccination is uncommon.

SYMPTOMS

Rabid animals may display the following symptoms:

- Loss of fear toward humans
- Nocturnal animals present/awake during the day
- Glazed or unfocused stare
- Frequent shifting of aggressive behavior from one object to the next
- Stubborn, undeterred approach
- Staggered gait
- Biting the ground or other objects
- Excessive salivation
- Lack of response if struck by thrown object

PREVENTION

- Avoid coming into contact with potentially affected animals.
- Rabies virus can have a very long incubation period, lasting months or longer, so it is critical to report any potential exposure or contact with bats, even if no wound or bite is identified
- Those who have been previously vaccinated and have ongoing field risk may require periodic rabies titer checks and/or booster vaccinations.
- Pre-exposure immunization may be recommended for people involved in any activities that might bring them into direct contact with potential carriers in rabies-affected areas or who may be in remote areas a long way from medical assistance. Contact OHC or Vaden about your risk of exposure to rabies, if pre-exposure vaccination is recommended, and how to handle an exposure should it arise.

FIRST AID TREATMENT

- Immediately clean the wound thoroughly with soap and water.
- Address any trauma associated with the wound with supportive first aid measures.
- Seek medical attention, even if you have had pre-exposure immunization. Indicate that you had contact with an animal that may have been rabid. Physicians will likely administer post-exposure prophylaxis by a combination of administration of human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) and vaccine.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CDC [Rabies](#)

CDC [Traveler's Health Rabies](#)

Illness, injury and close call events shall be reported by submitting an [SU-17](#).

If you have questions or need support, contact EH&S's Field Safety Program at ehs_field_safety_support@lists.stanford.edu.

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