

Rabies Facts and Fiction

When most people think of *rabies*, they envision a scene from the movie, "To Kill a Mockingbird," a terrorizing dog, foaming at the mouth, hell-bent on destruction.



It is myth. These symptoms are untrue.

An animal's symptoms can include one or all of the following:

- Sharp and prolonged changes in your pet's disposition
- Wanting to be left alone
- Looks for dark places to hide
- General sickness
- Difficulty swallowing, depraved appetite, or prolonged behavior as if something is lodged in the throat
- Drooping jaw
- A loss of muscle coordination

Precautions

Rabies is a disease that can be transmitted by an animal's saliva or skunk spray and can be carried by any warm-blooded animal or human. Most cases found in Ventura county involve **bats, raccoons, and skunks**. These animals should always be avoided, especially when you are with your pet.

Rabies is an extremely dangerous virus disease of the brain and spinal cord. If left untreated in the human body it is always **fatal**. If you do not receive rabies injections, you will die. No preventive vaccine is 100% effective, so the best way to help prevent contact is to follow the suggestions below.

Ventura county is a rabies-endemic area. We usually find a half-dozen cases in wildlife every year. The danger is amplified, but not limited to, your county's rural areas. To help avoid a rabies incident in your family or your pet, follow these suggestions:

- Never allow your pet to roam free where wildlife is or may be present. They do not have to be bit by a rabies-infected animal in order to become infected.
- Vaccinate your pets and monitor revaccination dates.
- Report ALL animal/human and domestic animal/wild animal contact to your animal control agency
- Never handle wild animals.
- Sick or dying wildlife should be handled and treated by experts only.
- NEVER pet or touch bats, raccoons, or skunks, even those kept or shown by so-called 'experts' (most wildlife experts usually receive regular low-dose vaccinations called 'titers' to help prevent a rabies infection. You do not).
- Do not attempt to make pets out of wild animals. It is illegal and dangerous.

Animal Bites and Quarantines

Some animal owners try to hide the fact that their animal may have bitten someone, fearing retribution from animal control agencies. Quarantines are performed for health reasons only, not punishment. We understand that animal bites can be accidental. Since rabies is a deadly, easily-spread disease, though, we take bite incidents very seriously. We ask your help in simplifying and expediting the quarantine process.

This department handles over 100 animal bites and quarantines per month. If you are bitten by any animal (even your own dog or cat), wash the wound thoroughly with a disinfectant. Report the incident to your doctor and Ventura County Animal Services. Do NOT kill the animal, but DO get owner information or a good animal description. It is imperative that the biting or scratching animal be located by our department so that a proper quarantine or rabies fluorescent test can be preformed.

All animals involved in incidents wherein the human victim's skin is broken by an animal's scratch or bite are, by

law, quarantined. This is usually completed at the animal owner's home. Quarantines can also be completed at the main Camarillo shelter or a commercial veterinary facility (at the owner's expense). Animals which have come in direct contact with high-risk wildlife may be quarantined for an extended period of time.