

Rabies

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. Animals most often infected include raccoons, skunks, foxes, and bats. The virus is present in saliva and nervous tissue of a rabid animal. Avoiding encounters with raccoons can reduce the risk of exposure to rabies. Do not attempt to handle or capture a sick or apparently "orphaned" animal. Avoid animals that act strangely, especially those that are unusually tame, aggressive, or paralyzed. Be suspicious of daytime activity in raccoons, which normally are most active at night. In New York over the last decade more than 50 percent of the wild animals confirmed to have rabies each year have been raccoons.

Wild mammals, as well as cats, dogs, ferrets, and livestock may contract rabies. Thus, it is important to have all dogs and cats regularly vaccinated for rabies. If your pet has been in a fight with another animal, wear gloves to handle it. Isolate it from other animals and people, and telephone the Animal Control Office (ACO) at 617-846-1212 for instructions.

If you or someone you know is bitten or scratched by a raccoon, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and contact your physician immediately. Post-exposure rabies vaccinations may be necessary.

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