

**CRANBURY TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF HEALTH**

**RABIES
Background Information**

What is rabies?

- Rabies is a viral disease that is transmitted from a bite or contact with saliva from an infected animal. The virus targets the brain and spinal cord. It is a fatal disease in animals and humans.

Which animals are known to transmit rabies?

- Any mammal can contract rabies. Rabies is most often seen in wildlife: raccoons, bats, skunks, foxes and groundhogs. Small rodents (such as squirrels, rats, mice, hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils, and chipmunks) and lagomorphs (such as rabbits and hares) are almost never found to be infected with rabies and have not been known to cause rabies among humans in the United States. Unvaccinated dogs and cats can become infected after a bite from another infected animal, as can cattle. These domestic animals can then transmit rabies to other animals or to humans.

Are ferrets dangerous?

- Ferrets are common household pets that are often not vaccinated against rabies. They can acquire rabies when allowed to mix with wild animals. It is not possible to identify an infected ferret solely by its appearance.

How do people get rabies?

- Contact with saliva or the mouth of an infected animal may result in an infection.

Is it possible to be exposed to rabies and not know it?

- Yes. Usually rabies is transmitted by a bite from an infected bat, but exposure of eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound to bat saliva could result in rabies infection.
- People usually know when they have been bitten by a bat. However, because bats have small teeth which may leave marks that are not easily seen, there are situations in which a person should seek medical advice even in the absence of an obvious bite wound. The possibility of a rabies infection should be considered if a bat is:
 - near a sleeping person.
 - near an unattended child.
 - near an intoxicated or less than fully alert person.
- Non-bite exposures to rabies from any animal are very rare. Scratches, abrasions, open wounds, or mucous membranes contaminated with saliva or other potentially infectious material (such as brain tissue) from a rabid animal constitute non-bite exposures.

What should be done if a bat is found indoors?

- If it is certain that no exposure has taken place, close the doors and allow the bat to exit from an open window. It may be necessary to call the local animal control officer for help.
- If an exposure has or may have taken place, isolate the bat in one room and call the animal control officer to capture the bat for testing purposes.

What should be done in the event of an animal bite to a human or other potential rabies exposure?

- Take precautions needed to prevent subsequent bites or exposures.
- Initiate routine first aid measures, including washing the wound or contact site, and arrange medical care for injured or exposed individuals.
- Contact Police Department and/or animal control officer.

- Verify the immunization records of a domestic animal when possible. Provide this information to the physician who cares for the victim
- If possible, stay aware of the animal's location until the police or animal control officer arrives, but do not approach or take action against the animal.
- Avoid contact with the suspect animal and prevent pets from exposures to potentially infectious saliva or body parts.

What should be done if a pet was in a fight with a rabies infected animal?

- Obtain veterinary help for wounds as needed. Do not allow your unprotected hand to contact the wound.
- Any animal bitten or scratched by either a wild, carnivorous mammal or a bat that is not available for testing should be regarded as having been exposed to rabies. Unvaccinated dogs, cats, and ferrets exposed to a rabid animal should be euthanized immediately. If the owner is unwilling to have this done, the animal should be placed in strict isolation for 6 months and vaccinated 1 month before being released. Animals with expired vaccinations need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Dogs and cats that are currently vaccinated are kept under observation for 45 days.

TO REACH THE CRANBURY TOWNSHIP ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER

Contact the Cranbury Township Police Department

at (609) 395-0031

or emergency at 9-1-1

Based on recommendations of CDC. For more information, view <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>