



Ten Facts About Rabies

1. Rabies is (Nearly) Everywhere!

With the exception of Antarctica, rabies is present on all continents. In the United States, rabies has been reported in every state except Hawaii.



2. Rabies = Rage

The word "rabies" originates from a Latin word that means "to rage". That's because animals with rabies often act violently. As the disease progresses, animals develop hypersensitivity to light and sound as well as paralysis of the nerves that control the head and throat — eventually the rabid animal goes into respiratory failure and dies.

3. Rabies is Spread through Saliva

The rabies virus is spread via contact with saliva from of an infected animal. Though transmission is usually through a bite wound, rabies has been known to spread through a scratch or an existing open wound.



4. Rabies Incubation Period Varies

The incubation period — the time elapsed between exposure to a disease and when signs and symptoms first become apparent — for rabies can vary greatly. According to the American Humane Association, the typical incubation period is three to eight weeks. However, it can be as little as nine days or as long as several years in some rare cases.



5. Any Mammal Can Get Rabies

That's right. It's pretty scary that you, your dog, your cat, or that raccoon around your neighborhood could get (or even have) rabies. The most common rabies carriers in the U.S. are raccoons, bats, skunks, and foxes.



6. Rabies More Common in Cats than Dogs

Cases of rabies in domestic pets average 400 to 500 per year, according to the American Humane Association. During 2010, 48 states and Puerto Rico reported 2 human rabies cases and 6,154 rabid animals to the CDC. Of that total, there were found to be 303 cats and 69 dogs with rabies.

7. Rabies Records are often required

Depending on where you live you may be required to keep up-to-date rabies vaccination records for your pets. In some states yearly rabies vaccinations for dogs and cats are mandatory, while in others areas vaccines are only required every three years. Review local government guidelines to see what applies to your pets.

8. Rabies Vaccines Can Have Side Effects

Like with any vaccine, there is a possibility your dog or cat may have an adverse reaction to the rabies vaccination. Signs include fever, loss of appetite, facial swelling, hives, diarrhea and pain, swelling, or hair loss around the injection site. If you suspect your pet is suffering from side effects to the rabies vaccine, call your veterinarian immediately.



9. Quarantining of Rabid Pets Does Happen

In many states, an unvaccinated pet that has been bitten by a wild animal or that has received a bite wound of unknown origin must undergo a six-month rabies quarantine (typically at an animal control facility at the owner's expense). This period is meant to ensure that the animal does not have rabies and is for the safety of humans and other animals.

10. Rabies Vaccines are Available

Dogs can receive the rabies vaccination as early as 6-8 weeks of age, and cats as early as 8 weeks. Consult your veterinarian if you have a new puppy or kitten and want to get them vaccinated against rabies, or if you have let your pet's rabies vaccine lapse. In many states regular rabies vaccinations for dogs and cats is required by law.

