



## Rabies: General Information

Rabies is a preventable disease that affects the brain. It is a fatal disease that has no known cure once a person starts to get ill. Wild animals spread rabies to each other by biting. People can get the disease if they are bitten by a rabid animal.

West Virginia has around 100 cases of animal rabies every year. Bat rabies may be found anywhere in the state, but raccoon strain rabies is concentrated in the eastern half of the state. If you are directing or staffing a camp in West Virginia, it is a good idea to know what kind of animal rabies occurs in your area so you can protect campers and staff.

For a current map of rabies cases in West Virginia, see:

<http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/Zoonosis/Rabies/Documents/2013-WVDHHR-Positives.pdf>.

For historical data on animal rabies by county, see

[http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/Zoonosis/Rabies/Documents/Rabies\\_by\\_County.pdf](http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/Zoonosis/Rabies/Documents/Rabies_by_County.pdf).

Camp staff or directors with questions about animal rabies can also contact their local health department of the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at **1-(800)-423-1271, extension 1**.

## Bats and Rabies

Most bats are healthy. Camp is a great place for campers and staff to learn to appreciate the beauty of bats flying around at dusk, eating mosquitoes and other insects. Bats are a beneficial part of our ecosystem. However, some bats have rabies.

### Teach staff and campers:

- Appreciate the beauty of bats from a distance. Don't chase or touch bats.
- If you find a bat on the ground or in a building or tent, stay away from it. Tell your friends to stay away. Tell a responsible adult.
- Tell an adult if you are bitten by a bat.
- Tell an adult if you are not sure if you have been bitten by a bat (e.g., you wake up and find a bat has landed on you or you collide with a bat)

### Arrange a medical evaluation and notify your local health department right away if:

- A staff member or camper is bitten by a bat
- A staff member or camper is unsure if she/he has been bitten by a bat (e.g., they woke up because a bat landed on them while sleeping or if they awakened and found a bat in the same room)



## Your local health department can:

- Help you determine if there is any risk of rabies
- Help you get the bat tested for rabies, if indicated
  - If the bat is dead or disabled, the bat can be scooped into a coffee can or plastic container and refrigerated. Do not touch the bat with bare hands. Wash hands after securing the bat.
- Work with a responsible physician to determine if rabies vaccine is needed to prevent rabies.

## Wildlife and Rabies

The most common animals that have tested positive for rabies in West Virginia are raccoons, skunks and foxes. However, bears, bobcats, coyotes and groundhogs have also been found to be rabid.

You cannot tell if an animal has rabies just by looking at it; however, here are some common signs shown by rabid animals:

- Strange behavior – acting very tame or very aggressive.
- Change in voice.
- Active during a time of day that is not normal (e.g.. raccoons and skunks are normally active at night and are not usually seen during the day).
- Lack of coordination, such as stumbling or trembling.

## Teach staff and campers:

- Appreciate the beauty of wildlife from a distance. Don't approach wildlife.
- If you see a wild animal behaving in a strange way, stay away from it. Tell your friends to stay away. Tell a responsible adult.
- Tell an adult if you are bitten or scratched by a wild animal.

## Arrange a medical evaluation and notify the your local health department right away if:

- A staff member or camper is bitten or scratched by a wild animal

## Your local health department can:

- Help you determine if there is any risk of rabies
- Help you get the animal tested for rabies, if indicated
- Work with a responsible physician to determine if rabies vaccine is needed to prevent rabies.



## Pets in Camp

While campers and staff may appreciate the company of a well-trained dog or cat, camp administration should exercise caution if they decide to bring the family pet to a residential or day camp setting:

- Make sure pets are well-trained. Educate campers and staff about appropriate interactions with the dog or cat at the beginning of camp. Monitor campers if they are allowed to interact with the dog or cat.
- Make sure your pets are up-to-date on their vaccines.
- Keep dogs on a short leash.
- Use extra precautions with your pet at dusk and dawn.
- Do not let dogs interact with wildlife.

Stray dogs and cats can get rabies because they are usually not vaccinated. Teach campers and staff to stay away from strays, and tell an adult if they see a stray animal. Consult your county animal control officer or your local health department about management of stray animals.

If your pet gets attacked or bitten by a wild animal:

- Take your pet to a veterinarian.
- Report the incident to your local health department.

## Wildlife Safety

Preventing wildlife encounters is important to maintaining a safe camp. Encourage campers and staff to follow these rules:

- Always keep a clean camp.
- Never leave food lying out.
- Never dump food scraps or other smelly stuff near your camping area.
- If car camping, lock food, trash, and scented items in a vehicle when not in use.
  - If camping in the wilderness without a car, food should be hung in a tree out of reach of animals and away from your tent.
- Dispose of trash in animal resistant trash cans.
  - Remove grease from barbecue grills, including the grease cup underneath, after each use.
- Plan ahead. Use camping areas that are known to be safe. Where possible, use designated camping areas.



# WILDLIFE SAFETY INFORMATION

www.wvcampsafety.com



- Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance.
- Never feed wild animals.
- Never approach young animals. Never touch dead animals found in the wild.
  - Schedule recreational activities during daylight hours.

## For more information about rabies and wildlife:

- <http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=771508>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/rabiesandkids/derick.html>
- <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/Zoonosis/Rabies/Pages/Rabies.aspx>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/>
- [www.wvdnr.gov](http://www.wvdnr.gov)
- [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)