



Wildlife Safety For Parents

Rabies

About: West Virginia has about 100 cases of animal rabies per year. Rabies is a preventable disease that affects the brain. It is fatal with no known cure once a person begins to get ill. Rabies is spread from one animal to another in the wild through biting. Rabies can also spread to people through the bite of a rabid animal via the animal's saliva. It can only be confirmed through laboratory testing.

Commonly Affects: Bats, Raccoons, Skunks, and Foxes, but can affect any mammal. Pet dogs and cats need to be vaccinated to prevent acquiring the acquisition of rabies.

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

- Strange behavior – an animal may be very docile or behave very aggressively.
- Change in voice of the animal.
- The animal is active during a time of day that is not normal (example: raccoons and skunks are usually active at night and not seen during the day).
- Drooling or excessive salivation.
- Lack of coordination, such as stumbling or trembling.

What To Do If Bitten: Anyone who is bitten or is unsure if he or she was been bitten (landed on by a bat or scratched/bitten by a mammal) by a wild animal should receive a medical evaluation immediately. The doctor will:

- Wash the wound carefully.
- Determine if rabies vaccination is needed.
- Report the bite to the local health department.

The local health department will:

- Determine if the animal should be observed or tested for rabies.
- Monitor situation till resolved.

How Do I Avoid Bites?: Teach your child to not approach or touch or chase wild or stray animals. If he or she encounters one in a building or laying on the ground DO NOT TOUCH IT. Instruct your child to tell friends to stay away as well and get an adult.

What About Cats and Dogs?: Rabies in dogs and cats is very unusual because of the success of animal vaccination programs. However, some people do not vaccinate their pets. Teach your child to stay away from stray animals and tell an adult right away if scratched or bitten by a pet dog or cat.

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Educate your children on the importance of following these simple rules while camping. Although camping is a fun experience, stress that safety is a priority.

- Always keep a clean camp.
- Never leave food lying out.
- Never dump food scraps or other smelly stuff near your camping area.
- When car camping, lock food, trash, and scented items in a vehicle when not in use.
- If you are in the wilderness and don't have 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.
- Stay with your group.
- Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance.
- Never feed wild animals.
- Never approach young animals. The mother may be close by and threatened by your presence.
- Remember all wildlife can be dangerous:

If you see a wild animal, stop. Do not turn your back on or run from it. Slowly back away from the animal while raising your arms and keeping your eyes on it.

Stand tall, wave your hands and makes lots of noise.

If you are near a building or vehicle, get inside as a precaution.

Warn those around you that a wild animal is in the area.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The following websites provide additional information about rabies:

[Centers For Disease Prevention and Control \(CDC\) Podcast on Rabies](#)

[CDC Kids Rabies Page](#)

[CDC Rabies Page](#)

[CDC Resources on Bats and Rabies](#)

[West Virginia State Health Rabies Page](#)