



WHAT THE PUBLIC NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT RABIES CONTROL

The Erie County Health Department responds to all rabies investigation reports within Erie County, and within the Vermilion City limits of Lorain County. The exposure is investigated for animals expressing odd behavior to a bit/scratch exposure to a human or animal.

What is rabies and how could I get it?

Rabies is an infectious, viral disease that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. Diagnosis of the disease is confirmed when brain tissue is tested after death.

All mammals have the potential to carry the rabies virus, even domestic pets. The disease is most common in wild mammals such as raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes. Dogs and cats are the most frequently reported animals for rabies investigations. Pets can be infected when bitten by a rabid mammal. Small rodents such as squirrels, rats, mice, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, and chipmunks rarely contract rabies. Exposures to these types of animals are considered a low risk situation for contracting rabies.

What should I do if I think I've been exposed to rabies?

- 1.) Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and seek immediate medical attention.
- 2.) Report the exposure to your local health district (Erie County Health Department 419-626-5623)

Note: Any time a person is bitten or scratched by a domestic or wild mammal, the incident must be reported to the local health district, even if the mammal is a family pet, and has an up-to-date rabies vaccine.

Is treatment available for people who may have been exposed to rabies?

An effective rabies vaccine regimen is available. This regimen consists of one dose of immune globulin and five doses of the rabies vaccine over a 28 day period. The vaccines are given in the arm and can be administered after an exposure or for protection before an exposure occurs. The pre-exposure vaccine is recommended for persons in high-risk professions such as veterinarians, mammal handlers, and certain laboratory workers.

What happens if a wild mammal bites my dog or cat?

Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and report the bite to your veterinarian and the local health district immediately.

Identify the type of wild mammal involved in the incident. If possible, capture the wild mammal. Please use extreme caution if you try to capture an animal yourself.

Do not destroy the wild mammal. A tissue sample of the mammal's brain is necessary to determine if the mammal was rabid.

Note: If a specimen can't be taken for immediate testing please keep the specimen cool. However, you should never freeze a specimen that is to be tested because this can damage the tissues of the brain that need to be sampled.

How do I protect my pet from the rabies virus?

Keep rabies vaccinations up-to-date for all dogs, cats, and ferrets

Spay and neuter your animals

Keep cats and ferrets indoors and keep dogs under direct supervision while outside

Visit your veterinarian with your pet on a regular basis

How do I report a bite, scratch, or exposure?

Contact your local health district (Erie County General Health District telephone 419-626-5623)

Note: When reporting an incident involving your own animal please have a copy of the most recent rabies vaccine records available from your veterinarian.

What happens after a bite is reported?

Once a reported mammal bite is confirmed, the Health District notifies the mammal's owner of the quarantine rules. Any domestic mammal involved in an exposure incident is required by law to be quarantined for a minimum of 10 days from when the exposure occurred. The quarantine limits the mammal's contact with other mammals and humans, reducing exposure if the mammal involved does

have rabies. The quarantine period also allows the animal to be closely observed for signs and/or symptoms of the rabies virus.

Note: While an animal is on quarantine the animal shall not be sold, given away, re-located, or euthanized/killed.

What are signs and/or symptoms of the rabies virus that I should look for?

The mammal becomes aggressive, attacks, loses muscular control, exhibits salivation, or dies.

Note: If any of the symptoms are observed for an animal that is being quarantined the health district and your veterinarian should be informed immediately.

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