

# Rabies

---

## What is rabies?

Rabies is a disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. Rabies causes severe inflammation in the brain and spinal cord and is nearly always fatal. All mammals are susceptible to rabies, including humans.

## How is rabies transmitted?

Rabies virus is transmitted in saliva through the bite of an infected animal. Virus transmission can also occur if the saliva of an infected animal touches a cut, scratch, or other open wound.

## What animals carry rabies?

- In the United States, many different wild animal species can carry rabies. Skunks and bats are the most significant sources of rabies in Colorado, but other wild animals can also be infected.
- Domestic animals, such as dogs, cats, horses, and livestock, can become infected with rabies through contact with wild animals.
- Small rodents and rabbits do not usually carry rabies.

## What are the symptoms of rabies in animals?

- The first symptoms of rabies in animals are **lethargy** and **loss of appetite**.
- Infected animals usually behave abnormally. Examples of abnormal behavior include a change in temperament, aggression, restlessness, irritability, or reacting to imaginary objects.
- Infected animals might also show symptoms of inflammation in the brain. Examples include confusion, stupor, lack of coordination, excessive salivation, circling, staggering, tremors, paralysis or seizures.

## What should I do if I am bitten by an animal?

- First aid for an animal bite should include thorough cleansing of the wound with soap and water.
- All animal bites should be evaluated by a physician immediately. Antibiotics and a tetanus booster might be needed.
- Effective treatment is available to prevent rabies after a possible exposure. Tri-County Health Department can help determine if you should receive this treatment. Call us at the number below.

## What can I do to prevent rabies?

- Do not feed, touch, or handle wild animals.
- Have dogs, cats, horses, and livestock vaccinated regularly by your veterinarian.
- Maintain control of your pets by keeping cats indoors and keeping dogs under direct supervision.
- Spay or neuter your pets to reduce the number of unwanted or stray animals in your community.
- Call your local animal control office to remove stray animals from your neighborhood.
- Call the Colorado Division of Wildlife office at 303-291-7227 if you have problems with wild animals.



Eleven offices serving the residents of Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties  
Administration Office: 6162 S. Willow Drive, Suite 100 • Greenwood Village, Colorado 80111  
Telephone: 303-220-9200 • Fax: 303-220-9208 • Website: [www.tchd.org](http://www.tchd.org)