



ABOUT THE DISEASE

Rabies is a highly contagious and deadly virus that can infect any mammal. It is typically found in wild animals (most commonly skunks, bats, raccoons, foxes, etc.) and pets that are unvaccinated, especially those that spend time around wild animals.

The **rabies** virus is present in the saliva of infected animals and is most commonly transmitted through bite wounds. Rarely, **rabies** can be transmitted if saliva from an infected animal gets into the mucous membranes of a host (nose, eyes, mouth, open cut). **Rabies** virus cannot be transmitted through blood, urine, feces, or milk of infected animals.

Rabies is 100% preventable with vaccination. The vaccination should be administered to patients every 1 to 3 years (as dictated by the length of vaccine efficacy). The most effective vaccination series starts when animals are puppies or kittens and continues throughout adulthood.

Rabies virus is zoonotic. This means that it can be transmitted between mammalian species, including humans. Once clinical signs of **rabies** are evident, there is no effective treatment for this disease in any species.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Once introduced into a host, the virus travels via the central nervous system to the brain where it replicates. Therefore, we cannot detect the presence of **rabies** in the blood stream, so there is no blood test to confirm.

To get a diagnosis of **rabies** one must find viral inclusions in the brain tissue.

Clinical signs of **rabies** can vary between infected patients. There are two typical manifestations of rabies: furious **rabies** and dumb **rabies**. Common clinical signs of either form of **rabies** include changes in behavior, elevated temperature, and excessive salivation.

Along with the signs above, patients with furious **rabies** may show signs of agitation, aggressiveness, difficulty swallowing, muscle incoordination, and seizures.

Animals with dumb **rabies** may exhibit the above signs along with a dropped jaw, incoordination, and paralysis.

TREATMENT

Once an animal is exhibiting clinical signs of **rabies** there is no effective treatment.

Prevention of infection by adhering to proper vaccination protocols in your pets is key.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- There is no replacement for an appropriate vaccination series.
 - Please see the [Canine Wellness](#) and [Feline Wellness](#) documents for additional information.
- Do not allow unvaccinated patients to have contact with wildlife or other unvaccinated animals.
- If you think the patient has been exposed to **rabies**, contact your veterinarian to discuss proper next steps.