

# Rabies

## FACTS:

- Rabies is caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system of warm-blooded animals, including humans.
- Rabies is spread in a variety of ways. The most obvious is when an animal or human is bitten or scratched by an infected animal. It can also be spread if the infected animal's saliva comes into contact with the broken skin or mucus membranes of the eyes, nose or mouth.
- Rabies occurs in different disease strains depending on the type of wild mammal that is found in a given geographic area. For example, in Michigan, reservoir animals are bats and skunks.
- A higher number of rabies cases are usually reported in late spring, summer and early fall as animals, both wild and domestic, are more active during these seasons. Humans are also more active, venturing outdoors more often in the warmer months. Bats, which have the highest number of reported rabies cases, migrate to Michigan in the later summer and early fall.

## Bats, Bugs and Bacteria Month

## RESOURCES:

### Michigan Department of Community Health

<http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,1607,7-186-25807---,00.html>

### Michigan Department of Agriculture

[http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1566\\_2310\\_2326-11646--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1566_2310_2326-11646--,00.html)

### Rabies. Beware of Rabies. Be Aware of Rabies.

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/rabiesbrochure\\_1\\_6884\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/rabiesbrochure_1_6884_7.pdf)

### 2006 Michigan Rabies Conference Proceedings

<http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,1607,7-186-25807-143248--,00.html>

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – National Center for Infectious Disease

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/default.htm>



## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### Symptoms of a Rabid Animal (Michigan Department of Agriculture):

Foaming at the mouth and erratic behavior are two of the most widely known rabies symptoms. However, there are actually two categories of behavior that rabies produces: "dumb" and "furious" rabies.

#### Dumb Rabies

- Animals may become depressed and retreat to isolated places
- Wild animals may lose their fear of humans
- Signs of paralysis such as a drooping head, paralyzed hind limbs, abnormal facial expressions, and a sagging jaw may be exhibited by animals

#### Furious Rabies

- Animals may show extreme excitement and aggression such as:
  - attacking stationary objects or other animals
  - gnawing and biting their own limbs

### Residents should take the following precautions to protect themselves, their family members, and their animals from rabies (Michigan Department of Agriculture):

- Never handle unfamiliar wild or domestic animals, even if they appear friendly.
- Wash any wound caused by an animal thoroughly with soap and water and *seek immediate medical attention*.
- Test all wild or stray animals (excluding rodents) that may have exposed humans or other animals for rabies.
- Prevent bats from entering homes or other buildings where they might come in contact with humans or animals.
- Don't leave pet food or table scraps outside where they will attract wild or stray animals.
- Keep vaccinations current for all dogs, cats, and ferrets. Additionally, keep your cats and ferrets inside, and your dogs under direct supervision.
- Consult your veterinarian about vaccinations for horses and other livestock.
- Call animal control to remove stray animals from your neighborhood, and call nuisance animal control to deal with wildlife.

## SERVICES AVAILABLE:

If you have questions about exposure, contact your local health department or animal control office.

If they are unavailable, call the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) at 517-373-1077 during business hours, or call the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) at 517-335-8165 during business hours.

After 5:00 p.m. or on weekends, call MDCH at 517-335-9030, or MDA at 517-373-0440.