



## MAY is "Rabies Awareness Month"

Spring is an ideal time to remind children to avoid contact with unfamiliar dogs and cats as well as wild animals who become more active at this time of year. It is also the perfect time to ensure your pets are vaccinated against rabies.

### FAQ's about RABIES

**What is rabies?** Rabies is a disease caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system of warm-blooded animals (mammals) including humans. It is a deadly disease that is preventable.

**How is rabies spread?** Rabies is spread through the saliva of infected dogs and cats or wild animals such as squirrels, bats, skunks, foxes and raccoons. You or your pets could get rabies if bitten or scratched by an infected animal, or if their saliva comes in contact with the moist tissues of the mouth, nose or eyes. Rabies could even be spread by the improper handling of a dead animal with rabies.

**How do I know if an animal has rabies?** You don't. An animal in the early stages of rabies may not show any signs. As the disease progresses, the rabid animal will begin to behave strangely. Their movements may appear stiff or awkward. Pets may lose their appetite or become unusually aggressive or lethargic. Wild animals may become overly friendly or overly aggressive, attacking and biting other animals, inanimate objects or even themselves. Night roamers, like raccoons and skunks, may wander about in daylight.

**What should I do if I think an animal has rabies?** Stay away from it. Do not get saliva from the animal on your skin. If it is a family pet, isolate it and do not touch it. Immediately call your veterinarian, humane society, animal control officer or the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

**What do I do if I am bitten or scratched or come in contact with the saliva?** Wash the wound or infected area with soap and water, apply an antiseptic and then get medical help immediately. Then report the incident to the Northwestern Health Unit so public health officials can take immediate action to control the spread of this contagious disease. You are also advised to contact the Northwestern Health Unit immediately if you ever wake up and find a bat (dead or alive) in the room with you as bats' teeth are so small that they can bite a human without leaving visible marks.

**EMERGENCY AFTER-HOURS NUMBER: 1 (807) 468-7109**

**Is there treatment for rabies?** The medical treatment is safe and effective. It consists of an early treatment injection plus five vaccine injections given over a one-month period.

## Protect yourself from rabies. Rabies can be prevented.

- Have your pets vaccinated.
- Don't let your pets roam free, especially at night.
- If one of your pets is bitten by another animal, contact your veterinarian.
- Don't handle wildlife - appreciate them at a distance.
- Do not pick up any sick-looking animal. Notify the animal control officer or humane society instead.
- Do not pet or adopt wild animals, even if they seem friendly.
- If you see a baby animal that appears to be orphaned, leave it alone. Chances are, its mother is nearby.
- Take measures to keep wild animals (like squirrels, bats, skunks, foxes and raccoons) from moving into your house or garage.

