



# Fact Sheet for Owners of Animals Involved in a Rabies Investigation

Animal Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of animal: (species, colour, breed, etc) \_\_\_\_\_

Your pet has bitten or scratched a person and you will need to keep your pet in a confined area away from humans and other animals for 10 days to make sure it does not have rabies.

Below are answers to some questions you may have:

## 1. How can I protect my pets against rabies?

- Make sure your pets are vaccinated against rabies every three years, or annually (depending on the vaccine used by your vet) even if kept indoors all of the time.
- Do not allow pets to wander freely, and avoid contact with stray or wild animals.

## 2. Does rabies kill pets?

Yes. Once signs of rabies develop in the animal it is fatal.

Although a fully vaccinated animal is unlikely to become infected with rabies, rare cases have been reported. Because there is no cure for rabies once symptoms appear, even a vaccinated pet must be watched for 10 days. As the rabies virus multiplies in the brain it travels to the saliva of the animal. Once the virus is in the saliva, the animal/pet will become sick, show signs of rabies or die within 10 days.

## 3. What happens if my pet bites or scratches someone?

Rabies is a virus spread in the saliva of an infected animal when the animal bites or scratches another animal or a person. Scratches are considered a risk because dogs, cats or ferrets continually lick their paws, and therefore saliva may be present on the toenails of the animal and enter the skin of the person who has been scratched.

If your pet is healthy but has bitten someone or is suspected of being exposed to rabies, your pet must be isolated and confined for a period of 10 days away from all animals and people (except for the person caring for the animal). During the 10 days, watch your pet for abnormal behaviour or signs of rabies (see below) and report any unusual behaviour to the Environmental Health Officer. If your animal is well after 10 days, there is no risk of rabies to the animal or the person the animal bit or scratched.

## 4. What signs should I look for in my pet while it is being watched?

The first sign of rabies is usually a change in an animal's behaviour.

There are two types of rabies (Furious or Dumb rabies). Some animals may show a combination of these two types described below, or they may show no signs of rabies at all.

### Furious Rabies – the animal may:

- Wander aimlessly – usually in a straight line
- Show excitement, be restless, or irritable
- Attack and bite objects
- Eat cloth, soil, stones or sticks
- Gnaw and bite their own limbs/wounds
- Have a change in bark
- Have lower jaw sag/hang, muscle paralysis, heavy drooling and seizures
- Have difficulty controlling body movements, muscle weakness and death.



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Dumb (or Paralytic) Rabies:

- The animal rarely bites, is not irritable
- Change of tone in bark – hoarse bellow
- Animal may look like it is choking
- Paralysis of facial muscles
- Yawning movements, salivation
- Progressive weakness and death.

\*\*If your pet has any of these signs, or starts to look sick, call the Environmental Health Officer **immediately** at the phone number below.

**5. Does my pet need to be vaccinated for rabies?**

If your pet is up-to-date with its rabies vaccination, it does not need to be vaccinated at this time. However, if your pet is due for vaccination, or has never been vaccinated, it should be vaccinated within 14 days of the **end** of the 10 day observation period. If your pet is under 3 months of age at the time of the exposure, it should be vaccinated for rabies by the time it is 3.5 months old.

You will be contacted again on \_\_\_\_\_ to make sure that your  
(Date)  
pet is healthy. If you have any questions, please contact:

Environmental Health Officer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone number (during business hours): \_\_\_\_\_

After Hours Phone Number: **1-855-407-2676**