



By Dr. Maria Krenz, DVM – The Zimmerman Veterinary Clinic 763-856-4848

Prevent a Deadly Disease – World Rabies Day, Sept. 28

What is Rabies? Rabies is a virus that is secreted in saliva and attacks the nervous system. It is spread through animal bites. Once signs of the disease are present fatality is near 100%.

What animals carry rabies? Only mammals can be infected with and transmit rabies. Most cases of rabies in Minnesota occur in Skunks and Bats. Other species include raccoons, coyotes and foxes. Cats are the most common domestic animal infected with rabies, but it also occurs in dogs, cattle, horses, sheep, goats, pigs and ferrets.

What are the signs of rabies? Animals can show a variety of signs once rabies reaches the brain. They can be aggressive, stagger, have seizures, drool excessively, have difficulty swallowing or even act fearful. The only test to confirm rabies is by looking at the brain after the pet is deceased. Due to the variation in signs, people may be exposed to the rabies virus before a diagnosis is made.

How do I prevent rabies? The best way to prevent rabies is to have your veterinarian vaccinate all dogs, cats, ferrets, or horses in the household. Cats have been shown to be three times more likely than dogs to contract rabies due to their hunting habits. Even indoor cats can catch and contact bats. Revaccinate your pets based off of your veterinarian's recommendations. After the initial vaccine series, the American Animal Hospital Association recommends that pets are boosted with a rabies vaccine every three years. According to state law, only a veterinarian can administer a rabies vaccination.

What if I get bit or my pet gets bit by another animal? Bites to humans in Sherburne County should be reported to the Sherburne County Sheriff's Office at 763-241-2500, or dial 911. Wild animals that are a public health concern should also be reported to the Sheriff's office. If your pet gets bit by a wild animal please contact your veterinarian.

World Rabies Day will be celebrated Sept. 28. 55,000 people die every year worldwide from rabies. Children are at the highest risk of contracting rabies. Find more information on-line at www.worldrabiesday.org

Disclaimer: This written content is meant to be educational and is not medical advice. Always consult a veterinarian about medical advice for your pet.

