



RABIES: THE FACTS

What happens to biting animals?

• **Owned dogs and cats** must be confined for a 10-day observation period according to Animal Control regulations. If confined at the owner's home, any signs of illness or change in habits should be reported to Animal Control at 350-3360 immediately. If no signs of illness appear at the end of the 10 days, anti-rabies treatment is not necessary.

• **Un-owned dogs and cats** that bite are held at the Wichita Animal Shelter for three days for possible identification and redemption by an owner. If not redeemed, they are humanely destroyed and examined for rabies. If lab results are positive, the anti-rabies treatment can be initiated.

• **Wild animals known to carry rabies** should be confined or destroyed and picked up for testing by Animal Services. In order for the animal to be tested for rabies it is **important not to damage the head of the animal**. If bitten by a skunk or other wild animal known to carry rabies, and the wild animal cannot be located, treatment with anti-rabies serum and vaccine should be started immediately. Contact a physician that same day.

What if a wild animal NOT known to carry rabies bites a person?

A bite by one of the animals not found to be infected in nature would rarely, if ever, call for anti-rabies treatment in humans. However, it may be wise to see a doctor for a thorough wound cleaning and to receive a tetanus shot or antibiotics as indicated.

Is rabies vaccine painful or dangerous?

Any shot hurts a little when given, but the new rabies vaccine is safe and rarely causes pain or reactions. The recommended anti-rabies treatment involves injecting rabies immune globulin around the wound and five injections of the new human diploid cell rabies vaccine. The five doses of vaccine are given over one month and are to be given in the arm, hip or other muscle.

When bitten, Immediately do the following:

- Wash wound very thoroughly with soap and running water.
- Notify Animal Control at 350-3360. They will pick up the animal.
- Contact your physician. The wound will need to be examined, and treatment with anti-rabies vaccine may be necessary.



www.wichita.gov

**Animal Control Section
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316-350-3360
316-350-3372(fax)**

Serving the Public, Protecting the Animals

What is RABIES?

Rabies is an infection of the brain caused by a virus. The disease is usually fatal, but fortunately is rare in humans in the United States. About two human cases per year have occurred in recent years. Nearly 1,000 cases of rabies are reported annually in domestic animals while more than 5,000 cases of rabies are reported in wild animals. Rabies appears to come in cycles; peak years reporting more than five times the cases of an average year. This makes it even more important that domestic animals be vaccinated annually.

How is RABIES transmitted?

Rabies is usually transmitted from the bite of an infected animal. Transmission is also possible by contamination with infectious saliva through a break in the skin. Occasionally, farmers and veterinarians are exposed while treating cattle and horses.

Which animals are at greatest risk of getting RABIES?

In Kansas, rabies is most common in wild animals. Skunks have the disease most frequently, but it also occurs in bats, raccoons, foxes and coyotes. Dogs, cats and domestic livestock occasionally contract rabies from exposure to wild animals. The peak of rabies activity in Kansas occurs in the spring. Canine rabies in Sedgwick County is rare. In 1992, the first dog in 22 years was diagnosed with rabies. In 1996, a second dog with rabies was discovered – inside Wichita city limits. However, a rabid cat is diagnosed about once every two years. Cats are required by law to be vaccinated for rabies and are more likely to have contact with skunks because they are nocturnal animals.

What is being done to control RABIES?

Rabies in wildlife cannot be controlled. Humans can be protected by having pets immunized; specifically, pets that could contract rabies from exposure to wild animals. It is **required by law that dogs and cats be vaccinated annually**. Dogs must be licensed every year.

- **Vaccination and licensing of all dogs:** The City of Wichita and unincorporated areas of Sedgwick County and almost all other cities in Sedgwick County require annual rabies vaccinations and licensing of all dogs by pet owners. ***In Wichita and Sedgwick County all cats must be vaccinated.***

- **Strict enforcement of the leash law:** In Wichita and some other cities in Sedgwick County, all dogs must be confined by leash, rope, chain or within a fenced area or building sufficient to maintain the dog on the owner's property. In unincorporated areas of the county, the animal must be on the owner's property, but not necessarily confined.

- **Stray dog pick-up:** All citizens should report stray animals to their local control agency. In Wichita, call Animal Control at 350-3360. In other areas of Sedgwick County, call Sedgwick County Animal Care, 660-7070.

- **Investigation of animal bites:** All animal bites are investigated to prevent human death from rabies transmitted by a rabid animal. Wichita Animal Control personnel investigate bites occurring in the city limits of Wichita. Sedgwick County Animal Control personnel investigate bites that occur outside the city limits, but in Sedgwick County.

Which animals are NOT likely to have RABIES?

In Kansas, rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, prairie dogs, opossums, mice and rats have **not** been known to be involved in the transmission of rabies. This is also true of caged household pets such as hamsters, guinea pigs and gerbils. Ferrets are treated the same as dogs and cats.

What can a person do to avoid exposure to RABIES?

Individuals need to be aware of domestic pets that show a change in behavior. Avoid close contact with wild or sick animals. If a normally shy, wild animal, such as a skunk, becomes aggressive or friendly, do not try to feed, pet or pick up the animal. Call Animal Control at 350-3360. Don't pet stray animals or try to feed animals by hand. Be cautious of petting other people's pets. Don't try to catch stray cats that may go into a house or garage through open doors. Wild animals should never be kept as pets. If a skunk is seen during daylight hours on personal property, notify Animal Control at 350-3360.

What should one do in case of a bite?

If the bite was by a dog or cat, take careful notes of the animal's appearance so that it can be described and identified later. Try to obtain the correct name and address of the owner and look for a tag. If the animal is a stray, have someone stay alert to the animal's location. If the bite was by a wild animal, observe where it is hiding, or carefully try to confine it without exposing anyone to the risk of another bite.