

## Rabies

Rabies in animals has been reported throughout New Hampshire. It has been identified in both wild and domestic animals. In April of this year, a rabid bobcat was found in Allenstown.

The rabies virus is found in the brain, spinal cord and saliva of an infected animal and is spread when these tissues or fluids touch broken skin, open wounds, or mucous membranes (eyes, mouth or nose). In most cases rabies is spread by the bite of an infected animal.

Rabies can affect any mammal (animals with hair or fur), but it is more common in certain ones such as skunks, raccoons, foxes, woodchucks and bats. Cats, dogs and livestock can also get and spread rabies if they do not get or are not up to date with rabies shots to protect them. Rabies is very rare among rabbits, hares and small rodents.

If you have been bitten, scratched or have had contact with the saliva of an animal that you believe is rabid immediately wash the exposed area with soap and water (or flush with water if contact involves the eyes, nose, or mouth) for at least 10 minutes and immediately call your doctor. If your doctor recommends treatment, you will undergo a series of injections that should be given as soon as possible after an exposure to prevent you from developing illness.

Most human rabies cases in recent years have been associated with bats. If there is a chance you have had exposure to a bat through an unapparent bite, for example, the bat had direct contact with someone or was in a room with a sleeping individual, an unattended child or someone with mental impairment, you should contact your healthcare provider immediately to discuss the situation. The staff of the Division of Public Health Services Communicable Disease Control Section is available at 603-271-4496 for consultation and reporting of rabies exposures.

To protect yourself and your family:

- Do not touch, feed, pick up or adopt wildlife or stray dogs or cats, even if they seem to be healthy or friendly. If you see an animal acting strangely, call your local animal control authority
- Teach children to avoid wildlife and all animals they do not know well.
- Encourage children to immediately tell an adult if an animal bites them.
- Vaccinate pets. Vaccination is required by law in NH for dogs, cats, and ferrets 3 months of age and older, even if they stay indoors. Make sure your pet's vaccinations are up to date.
- If a pet has been in a fight with another animal, wear waterproof gloves when touching your pet. Call your veterinarian.
- If you have bats in your home, call a professional about bat-proofing your home.

For additional information go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/RABIES>