

Introduction:

Preventing Exposure to Rabies: Getting the Message Out

Contact with wild animals is the primary way that people, domestic animals and livestock are exposed to rabies. Wild mammals can transmit rabies even if they don't appear sick. By avoiding contact with wild animals and stray animals and by taking simple precautions, people can greatly reduce the chance that they or their domestic animals will be exposed to rabies and have to undergo medical treatment. The N.C. Division of Public Health Communicable Disease Branch offers the following recommendations for the public in the fact sheet, "Preventing Exposure to Rabies" which can be found in the Appendix. Please use the recommendations listed below in news releases and your educational efforts.

Practice the following precautions to prevent rabies exposures and to live safely with wildlife:

- Do not feed pets outdoors.
- Keep dogs, cats and ferrets and livestock currently vaccinated against rabies.
- Supervise pets while they are outside; A fenced yard is the best protection.
- Do not approach, feed or handle wildlife; leave orphan wildlife alone.
- If you see a wild animal or stray pet around your home that appears sick or unusual, or if you find a bat inside your home, call Animal Control in your county for assistance.
- If wildlife are damaging your property or are a threat to your health, you can hire a certified Wildlife Control Agent (WCA) to safely remove the animal.
<https://www.ncwildlife.org/Trapping/Wildlife-Control-Agent>
- Do not attract wildlife to your yard and do not feed wildlife.
- Remember, birdfeeders will attract squirrels, foxes and other mammals.
- Secure garbage. Remember that composting also attracts wildlife.
- Keep your yard mowed, shrubs trimmed, and clear fallen trees and debris from your yard.
- Repair holes in siding and screens, and place caps on chimneys and screens on attic vents to prevent wildlife such as raccoons and bats from entering.
- Be aware that any new construction on your home may allow wildlife to get in.
- If you are a person who regularly works with or around animals that may be exposed to rabies, consider getting pre-exposure prophylaxis (rabies vaccines).
- Travelers going outside of the United States should check the CDC's Travelers' Health website (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>) and the CDC Yellow Book to determine if rabies pre-exposure rabies vaccination is recommended before traveling to or through certain areas.

Remind people that if, in spite of their precautions, they are bitten by a possibly rabid animal or get its saliva on an existing scratch or wound or on their mucous membranes, they should wash the wound or exposed area immediately for 15 minutes with soap and clean, running water. They should promptly seek medical attention to determine if post-exposure prophylaxis (a series of rabies vaccinations) is needed to prevent development of the disease. Tell them to call Animal Control to capture the animal, if possible, so it can be tested for rabies.

These two web sites contain further information and fact sheets for the public: N.C. Public Health, Rabies (<http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/diseases/rabies.html>), and CDC, Rabies (www.cdc.gov/rabies).