



PRESS RELEASE

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VETERINARIANS URGE PET OWNERS TO VACCINATE AGAINST RABIES

(Springfield) Veterinarians are responsible for the health and welfare of animals and the public. There are many diseases that are transmissible from animals to humans. One of these diseases is rabies, a deadly disease that is caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system.

The rabies virus is secreted in saliva and is usually transmitted to people and animals by a bite from an infected animal. Less commonly, rabies can be transmitted when saliva from a rabid animal comes in contact with an open cut on the skin or the eyes, nose, or mouth of a person or animal. Once the outward signs of the disease appear, rabies is nearly always fatal. Most of the recent human cases of rabies in this country have resulted from exposure to infected bats.

Only mammals can get rabies and most cases occur in wild animals - mainly skunks, raccoons, bats, coyotes and foxes. In recent years, cats have become the most common domestic animal infected with rabies. This is because cat owners do not vaccinate their cats before the cats are exposed to rabid wildlife - and bats carrying the virus can get into the home. Rabies also occurs in dogs and cattle in significant numbers and has also been diagnosed in horses, goats, sheep, swine and ferrets.

Rabies prevention starts with the animal owner. All dogs, cats and ferrets should be vaccinated against rabies. Consideration should be given to vaccination of valuable livestock and horses. Animal owners can further reduce the possibility of their pets being exposed to rabies by not letting them roam free and by spaying and neutering their pets to decrease undesirable behavior and control the population of unwanted animals.

If your pet bites someone, contact your local health department or local animal control. A healthy dog, cat or ferret that is currently vaccinated against rabies that bites a human should be examined by a veterinarian immediately. Immediately report any illness or unusual behavior exhibited by your pet to the local health department and to your veterinarian.

If you or a member of your family is bitten by an animal you should wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and contact your physician immediately. Prompt and appropriate treatment

after being bitten and before the disease develops can stop rabies infection and/or prevent the disease.

Please contact your family veterinarian if you have questions about rabies or if one of your pets is bitten by another animal.

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