



Critters Corner presents: What you should know about **Rabies**

What is Rabies?

Rabies is a fatal disease that occurs in nearly all warm blooded animals although rarely among rodents. The main source of infection for humans is a bite from an infected dog or cat. However foxes, skunks, bats and other wild animals can serve as a reservoir for the disease, thereby accounting for sporadic cases. Any wild animal that allow you to approach it without running away from you is acting abnormally. Rabies should be suspected. Do not pet or handle such an animal.

How is Rabies spread?

The virus, which is present in infected saliva, usually enters at the site of a bite. Saliva on an open wound or mucus membrane would also consistute exposure to rabies. The virus travels to the brain along nerve networks. The further the bite is from the brain, the longer the incubation period. The virus then travels back along the nerves to the mouth where it enters the saliva.



What are some signs of Rabies infection?

The signs and symptoms of rabies are due to encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). The first signs are quite subtle and consist of personality changes. Affectionate and sociable pets may become irritable and aggressive. Shy and less outgoing pets

may become overly affectionate. Soon the animal becomes withdrawn and stares off into space. He/she avoids light, which hurts the eyes and seeks seclusion. Finally, they will resist handling. Fever, vomiting and diarrhea are common.

How is Parvovirus diagnosed and treated?

There are two characteristic forms of encephalitis. One is the so-called “furious” form and the other is the “paralytic” form. A rabid animal may show signs of one or a combination of both forms.

The furious form is the “mad dog” type of rabies. Here the animals become frenzied and vicious, attacking anything that moves. The muscles of the face are in spasm, drawing the lips back to expose the teeth. When running free he shows no fear and snaps and bites at anything.

In the paralytic form the muscles of the head become paralyzed causing the mouth to drop open and the tongue to hang out. The swallowing muscles become paralyzed which causes drooling, coughing spells and pawing at the mouth. As encephalitis progresses, the

animal loses control of its bowel movements, staggers about, collapses and is unable to get up.

How Protect Yourself?

Protect yourself, your family, and your pet from rabies by:

- Vaccinating ALL your pets
- Don't EVER let your pets roam unattended
- Take your cat out for a walk on a harness
- Educate your children and yourself on rabies and wildlife
- Don't touch immature wildlife no matter how cute
- If you see any animal behaving strangely, or drooling excessively contact your local Humane Society or Animal Control Department immediately
- Don't feed wildlife
- Don't approach any animal acting strangely, domestic or wild. Contact your local Humane Society or Animal Control Department immediately.
- Do not touch dead animals.
- Enjoy wildlife from a distance; don't approach wild animals too closely or try to keep them as pets.
- Don't panic when you see wildlife – observe from a distance and enjoy!

