



Vermont Integrative Veterinary Associates

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Rabies Fact Sheet

The rabies virus represents a serious risk to people and their pets. There are hundreds of cases of rabies in pets each year in the United States alone (last year in Vermont there were 48 reported cases). All it takes to contract this deadly disease is exposure to an infected animal through a scratch, cut or bite. Fortunately, vaccination against rabies is simple and effective (see below for state mandated rabies vaccine schedules).

What is rabies?

Rabies is an acute viral infection that can affect all warm-blooded animals (including dogs, cats, horses, cows, camelids, small ruminants, etc.) The disease is almost always caused by the bite of an infected animal that has rabies virus in its saliva. Younger animals are usually more susceptible to rabies infection. Unfortunately, rabies is always fatal once clinical signs appear.

What if my pet has possibly been exposed?

If your pet has been bitten by or exposed to a wild or potentially rabid animal, please contact Aesculapian Veterinary Service right away and report it to local animal control authorities. Even if your pet has a current rabies vaccination, please contact us right away (the current state recommendation is to have your pet re-vaccinated for rabies even if the rabies vaccine is current). Also, remember to not put yourself in harm's way as rabies can affect humans as well.

NOTE: Raccoons, bats, skunks, foxes, coyotes and other wildlife can all carry and spread the rabies virus.

Signs and prevention

Once the rabies virus enters the body, it travels along the nerves to the brain. It can take a matter of days, weeks or months for your pet to show signs of the rabies virus.

Infected animals often show anxiety, aggression, restlessness and erratic behavior. They may develop weakness, poor coordination or tremors. Wild rabid animals commonly lose their fear of humans. Species that are normally nocturnal may be seen wandering during the day.

Dogs, cats or ferrets that have never been vaccinated and are exposed to a rabid animal will need to be under strict isolation for a lengthy period of time and may need to be put to sleep. Vermont has special requirements for this and you should contact the clinic immediately if your unvaccinated animal has been exposed or bitten.

Vaccinate to protect your pet

Here at AVS we are committed to helping you make the best choices for your pet's health. To give your pet the protection it needs, we use the IMRAB vaccine, which is the leading vaccine for

rabies protection worldwide. Vaccination is one of the best ways we can help protect people and pets from rabies.

What else can you do?

- Don't leave garbage or pet food outdoors where it may attract wild or stray animals
- Observe all wild animals from a distance
- If you see a wild animal acting strangely, report it to your local animal control authorities

Vaccine schedules

• Most animals can be vaccinated starting at 3 months of age. Large animals (horses, cows, camelids, small ruminants) should be vaccinated every year for rabies. Small animals should be vaccinated starting at 3 months of age; after their first vaccination they have a booster one year later and then should then be vaccinated every three years. Our rabies vaccine protocols have been mandated by the state of Vermont.

Our computer system is equipped to send reminders shortly before these vaccines come due.

- In some cases a blood test, which checks for the level of protection in an individual animal, can be performed instead of a rabies vaccination. This is called a rabies titer. If you would like more information about rabies titers, please contact our office.

