

CITY OF CUERO

Rabies

Department of State Health Services Positive Animal Rabies Cases 3 Year Comparison (2005-2007)

What is rabies?

Rabies is a deadly virus that affects the central nervous system. You and your pets can be infected with the rabies virus if you are bitten by an animal that has the disease. You can also get rabies if the saliva from a rabid animal contacts your mucous membranes or any open wounds you might have. If you have such contact with a rabid animal, only a series of shots can keep you from getting the disease.

Signs of rabies include:

- Animals that have a change in behavior.
- Wild animals which seem to be friendly or tame.
- Wild animals—coyotes, foxes, bats, skunks, and raccoons—which you do not usually see in the daytime.
- Animals that have a hard time walking, eating, or drinking.
- Excitement or meanness in animals.
- Animals that bite or scratch at an old wound until it bleeds.

Important facts about rabid animals

If a pet is infected with the rabies virus, the way it acts may change. A friendly dog might want to be alone. A shy dog might want attention. Rabid dogs often become mean, roam, make strange noises and attack people and other animals. Rabid animals may drool, and they sometimes swallow stones, sticks, or other things.

Later, as the rabid animal gets even sicker, it might have trouble chewing, swallowing, drinking or walking. It may not be able to close its mouth, and may appear to be choking. Never try to clear the throat of an animal with these signs. If you see an animal acting this way, call the local animal control agency right away.

How to prevent rabies

- Have a veterinarian vaccinate your dogs and cats against rabies. By law, you need to do this every year or every 3 years depending on the type of vaccine used. Ask a veterinarian about the best vaccination schedule for your pet. Keeping your pets vaccinated protects you and them.
- Restrain your pets; do not allow them to roam.
- Avoid contact with wild animals and with dogs and cats you do not know. Do not approach strange dogs or cats. Do not try to hand-feed wild animals and do not keep them as pets.
- Do not touch sick or injured animals. Call and report them to an animal control officer.

If you are bitten

If an animal bites you, follow these steps. They may save your life.

- Quickly and thoroughly wash the bite with soap and water. Rinse it well.
- See a doctor as soon as possible. The doctor will decide if you need treatment to prevent rabies.
- Describe the animal that bit you--the kind, size, and color--to the doctor, local health authority, or animal control officer. Tell children to get help from a policeman, school guard, or other adult. Try to locate the animal or keep track of it if you know where it lives. Remember what it looked like.
- The local health authority needs to have the biting dog or cat tested for rabies or quarantined for 10 days. If the quarantined dog or cat is alive 10 days after the bite, it could not have given you rabies.

Biting skunks, bats, foxes, coyotes, and raccoons must be tested for rabies. If you are bitten by another kind of animal, the local health authority will decide if it needs to be tested or observed for rabies.

Who do I call for help?

If you need help dealing with an animal that might be rabid, call the Cuero Police Department for Animal Control at 277-3552.

This information provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services.