

# PUBLIC HEALTH CONNECTION



## Rabies: What to Know

**What is Rabies?** Rabies is a disease that affects the brain. It is caused by exposure to an animal that is infected by the rabies virus. Rabies is always a fatal disease in humans.

**How is Rabies Spread?** Rabies is most commonly spread through the bite of an infected (rabid) animal. It is also possible to become infected if the saliva of the infected animal gets directly into an open cut or wound, the eyes, mouth, or nose.

In Iowa, wild animals are much more likely to carry rabies, but pets such as dogs and cats can also be infected by the virus.

**How to know if an Animal is has Rabies?** The only ways to know for sure if an animal has rabies are by observing the animal in captivity for at least 10 days for rabies symptoms or by testing its brain after it is dead. Because rabid animals can look normal, the best prevention against rabies is avoiding bites from all animals.

**How to Prevent Rabies?** *For People:* Avoid contact and interaction with unknown animals. Teach children to stay away from unfamiliar animals, even ones that look friendly. Even animals that appear friendly can bite if provoked or if they are injured or trapped. Know that animals can easily bite through clothing and gloves. Your best protection is to call Animal Control to take care of removing nuisance or injured animals. Avoid contact with bats. Do not feed, try to catch, or play with wild animals. Do not disturb an animal while it is eating or taking care of its young. Do not stick your fingers into animals' kennels or cages. *For Pets:* Be a responsible pet owner. Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets and keep them away from wild animals. Do not let pets wander about, as it can expose them to possibly infected animals. Contact your veterinarian immediately if your pet is bitten by a wild animal or exposed to a bat, regardless of its rabies vaccination status.

**What To Do If Bitten?** If a bite occurs, immediately wash the wound with soap and running water. Washing the bite area can greatly reduce the chances of becoming infected with the rabies virus as well as other harmful bacteria that could cause infection. Next, report the animal bite to the Humane Society of Scott County's Animal Control Program (563-388-6655) or your local law enforcement agency. Reporting the bite helps Animal Control collect valuable information about the animal and the incident. An animal bite should also be reported to your family doctor. Your doctor will determine your risk of contracting rabies and whether treatment is needed. Even if the animal is not rabid, a bite can often become infected if not treated with antibiotics.



### OUR MISSION:

The Scott County Health Department promotes, protects, and preserves health through leadership, services, education, and partnerships.

### OUR VISION:

Scott County—  
A safe and healthy  
community.



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

- *Scott County Board of Health Meeting, Scott County Administrative Center, 1st Floor Boardroom, 12:00 PM, Thursday, October 15, 2015.*

## Links

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/contact/index.html>

Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH):

<http://www.idph.state.ia.us/Rabies/Public.aspx>

Scott County Health Department (SCHD):

<http://www.scottcountyiowa.com/health/animal-bites-rabies>

Humane Society:

<http://www.humansociety.org/animals/bats/tips/>

[bat in house humane removal.html](#)

## What to do if you Find a Bat in your House

It is best to keep bats out of your home. However, sometimes they make their way into a house. If a bite has occurred, contact Animal Control to have the bat tested for rabies. If you are certain that a bite has not occurred, here are several steps to follow to carefully remove the bat from your house:

**Step 1:** Stay calm and keep pets and children away. **Step 2:** Close all interior doors and give the bat a clear path to return outside. **Step 3:** If the bat does not leave on its own, it is best to try and catch it once he lands, if you can safely do so. Bats generally land somewhere that they can hang from; such as curtains, house plants, etc. **Step 4:** Wear thick gloves—not cotton and do not use a towel. Carefully place a container over the bat and gently work a piece of cardboard under the container, trapping the bat inside. **Step 5:** Once outside, you are ready to release the bat. Most bats cannot take flight from the ground; tilt the container or allow the bat to climb a tree trunk or similar surface. **Step 6:** Find where the bat made it into your home and seal all possible entries. Common entry points include openings that lead to attics or cellars.

If you awaken to find a bat in your bedroom, leave the room, close the door, and call Animal Control to capture the bat for rabies testing. Bats have small teeth and you could be bitten while sleeping without realizing it.

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