

RABIES: RARE BUT DEADLY

Rabies is an infectious disease that affects the central nervous system of mammals. There are two forms of the disease: “furious” and “dumb.” As the only way to definitively diagnose either form is through examination of deceased animals’ brain tissue, “diagnosis” is determined via symptoms. Unfortunately, rabies is known as the “great pretender” because symptoms aren’t always obvious. The disease is almost always fatal once clinical signs have appeared.



POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS:

- Unprovoked aggression such as biting at imaginary or real objects
- Excessive drooling
- Hyperexcitability or agitation



- Tamelessness in an undomesticated animal*
- Wobbliness or partial paralysis*
- High-pitched continual vocalization
- Self-harm such as tearing at open wounds



**Distemper can also cause wild animals to behave in this way.*

HOW TO PREVENT RABIES IN SHELTERS:

- Quarantine animals on intake prior to a health assessment and vaccines. A rabies vaccine on admission **does not** protect against an infection acquired prior to intake.
- Group animals into small cohorts to prevent widespread exposure and limit the number of animals needing isolation should symptoms occur.
- Consider building or grouping your shelter in pods that can be closed off from other pods, and/or separating animals by species, physical and behavioral traits, age and health status.
- Vaccinate all domestic animals, **including free-roaming cats**, against rabies.
- Perform routine medical rounds to monitor food and water consumption, urination, defecation, attitude and ambulation.
- Humanely euthanize animals who have signs of rabies, an unknown vaccination history and a puncture wound of unknown origin to prevent further suffering and protect others from exposure.
- Report all bites from an unfamiliar animal to a veterinarian and a healthcare professional.

→ Learn more at humanepro.org.