



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About BITES and Other Animal Exposures\*

\*Other animal exposures of concern are: 1) scratches that break the skin and 2) any situation where saliva from an animal not vaccinated against rabies enters a person's mouth, eyes, or a wound.

- [Domestic Animal FAQs](#)
- [Wildlife FAQs](#)
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### Domestic Animal FAQs

#### What should I do if my pet or another animal bites me?

- Go immediately to your health care provider (e.g., family doctor or emergency room).
  - If possible, immediately wash out the wound well with soap and water.
- Talk with your health care provider about the risk of **rabies** infection.
- Find out if the animal that bit you was up-to-date on their rabies vaccine.
- Talk with your health care provider about risk of tetanus (lock jaw) infection.
  - Find out if you are up-to-date on your tetanus vaccine.
- Talk with your health care provider about whether you need antibiotics.
  - Persons with diabetes, immunosuppressive diseases, and other chronic diseases are at particular risk from animal bites and scratches.
- Contact your health care provider and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (tel. 215 685-6748) if you have any questions.

## What should I do if my pet bites another person?

- Give the bite victim and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health the following information: 1) your home address and telephone number; 2) the name of your pet's veterinarian; and 3) your pet's rabies vaccination and licensing information.
- Talk with your pet's veterinarian and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health about having your pet quarantined for 10 days after biting a person or having your pet tested for rabies.
  - Your pet **cannot** be vaccinated against rabies or receive a rabies booster vaccine until this 10-day quarantine is over.
  - If your pet develops no signs of rabies and is still alive after this 10-day quarantine, your pet did not have rabies when it bit the victim and could not have infected the bite victim with rabies.
  - If your pet develops signs of rabies or dies during this 10-day quarantine, they will need to be tested for rabies.
- If you are unable to quarantine your pet, your pet may need to be euthanized and tested for rabies.
- Contact the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (tel. 215 685-6748) if you have any questions.

## What should I do if a stray or unknown animal bites my pet?

- If possible to do without causing injury to yourself, trap the animal and take to PACCA/PAWS (tel. 267 385-3800, 111 West Hunting Park Avenue).
  - PACCA/PAWS may have traps available for loan.
  - PACCA/PAWS may quarantine the animal for 10 days or submit the animal to the Philadelphia Department of Health's Laboratory for rabies testing.
  - If the animal tests negative for rabies or is still alive 10 days after biting your pet, your pet cannot develop rabies from that bite.
  - If the animal tests positive for rabies, your pet may develop rabies from that bite and needs to be quarantined (see directions below).
- Talk with your veterinarian about: 1) wound care and a booster rabies vaccine for your pet; 2) reporting the bite to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture; and 3) whether your pet needs to be quarantined.
- If the animal that bit your pet is **not** available for quarantine or observation:
  - Your pet, if up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, may need to be quarantined and observed for 90 days.

- If your pet is up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, they may receive a rabies booster vaccine at the beginning of the 90-day.
  - Your pet, if **not** current on their rabies vaccine, will need to be quarantined and observed for six months.
    - If your pet is **not** up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, your pet may receive the rabies vaccine at the beginning of or a month prior to completing the six-month quarantine.
- If you are unable to quarantine your pet, your pet may need to be euthanized and tested for rabies.
- Contact your pet's veterinarian and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (tel. 610 489-1003) if you have any questions.

### What should I do if an owned animal bites my pet?

- Get from the other pet's owner the following information: 1) their home address and telephone number; 2) the name of their pet's veterinarian; and 3) their pet's rabies vaccination and licensing information.
- Talk with your veterinarian about: 1) wound care and a booster rabies vaccine for your pet; 2) reporting the bite to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture; and 3) whether your pet needs to be quarantined.
  - If the other animal tests negative for rabies or is still alive 10 days after biting your pet, your pet cannot develop rabies from that bite.
  - If the animal tests positive for rabies, your pet may develop rabies from that bite and needs to be quarantined (see directions below).
    - Your pet, if up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, may need to be quarantined and observed for 90 days.
      - If your pet is up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, they may receive a rabies booster vaccine at the beginning of the 90-day.
    - Your pet, if **not** current on their rabies vaccine, will need to be quarantined and observed for six months.
      - If your pet is **not** up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, they may receive the rabies vaccine at the beginning of or a month prior to completing the six-month quarantine.
- If you are unable to quarantine your pet, your pet may need to be euthanized and tested for rabies.
- Contact your pet's veterinarian and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (tel. 610 489-1003) if you have any questions.

## What should I do if my pet bites another person's pet?

- Give the other pet's owner the following information: 1) your home address and telephone number; 2) the name of your pet's veterinarian; and 3) your pet's rabies vaccination and licensing information.
- Talk with your pet's veterinarian and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture about having your pet quarantined for 10 days after biting another pet or tested for rabies.
  - Your pet **cannot** be vaccinated against rabies or receive a rabies booster vaccine until this 10-day quarantine is over.
  - If your pet develops no signs of rabies and is still alive after this 10-day quarantine, your pet did not have rabies when it bit the other pet and could not have infected the other pet with rabies.
- Contact your pet's veterinarian and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (tel. 610 489-1003) if you have any questions.

## Why does my pet (or any cat, dog, or ferret that I feed) need to have a rabies vaccine?

- Rabies is a fatal disease and an animal will die if infected.
- Rabies has no cure.
- Routine rabies vaccinations given by your pet's veterinarian will prevent rabies.
- If your pet (or any animal that you feed or come into contact with) develops rabies and bites you, you will need to receive several rabies injections and vaccinations over an entire month after consulting with your health care provider and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (tel. 215 685-6748).
- It only takes one bite from an animal infected with rabies to spread the disease to another animal. So, if your pet is not up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, they may become infected with rabies if:
  - They get into a fight just once outside and are bitten by a rabid animal.
  - They escape just once from your home and are bitten by a rabid animal.
  - A rabid bat enters your home and bites them just once.
  - A stray or wild animal enters your home and bites them just once.

- If your pet is not up-to-date on their rabies vaccine and bites someone, that person and their health care provider may insist that your pet be euthanized (i.e., put down) and tested for rabies.
- If your pet (or any cat, dog, or ferret that you feed) is not up-to-date on their rabies vaccine and is bitten by another unvaccinated animal (e.g., stray or wild animal), they may become infected with rabies.
  - Your pet (or any cat, dog, or ferret that you feed) will need to be quarantined in your home or at a veterinary clinic for six months.
  - If you are not able to quarantine your pet (or any cat, dog, or ferret that you feed), they may need to be euthanized (i.e., put down) and tested for rabies.

### **What should I do if I find a hurt animal near my home or on the road?**

**NEVER APPROACH OR PICK UP A HURT, STRAY OR WILD ANIMAL WITHOUT WEARING HEAVY GLOVES, CLOTHING, AND FACE PROTECTION. Call the police if the animal might bite.**

- If a wild animal, call the Pennsylvania Game Commission (tel. 610 926-3136).
  - **Remember that hurt and sick animals are sure to bite!**
- If a dog or cat (and you can safely approach the animal), check to see if they have an identification or rabies tag with a number you can call.
  - **Remember that hurt and sick animals are sure to bite!**
  - Call the police if you are unable to approach the cat or dog without being bitten.
  - Call your veterinarian or the closest veterinarian (e.g., emergency veterinary practice) to discuss possible treatment options.
  - Take the dog or cat to the closest veterinary facility or PACCA/PAWS for assistance in identifying the pet's owner.
- If livestock (e.g., cow, goat, and horse) call the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (tel. 610 489-1003) and do not approach the animal unless instructed to do so by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture or a city official.

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## Wildlife FAQs

### What should I do if a wild animal bites me?

- Go immediately to your health care provider (e.g., family doctor or emergency room).
  - If possible, immediately wash out the wound well with soap and water.
- Talk with your health care provider about the risk of **rabies** infection.
- Talk with your health care provider about risk of tetanus (lock jaw) infection.
  - Find out if you are up-to-date on your tetanus vaccine.
- Talk with your health care provider about whether you need antibiotics.
  - Persons with diabetes, immunosuppressive diseases, and other chronic diseases are at particular risk from animal bites and scratches.
- Contact your health care provider and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (tel. 215 685-6748) if you have any questions.

### What should I do if I find a hurt wild animal near my home or on the road?

**NEVER APPROACH OR PICK UP A HURT, STRAY OR WILD ANIMAL WITHOUT WEARING HEAVY GLOVES, CLOTHING, AND FACE PROTECTION. Call the police if the animal might bite.**

- If a wild animal, call the Pennsylvania Game Commission (tel. 610 926-3136).
  - **Remember that hurt and sick animals are sure to bite!**
- If livestock (e.g., cow, goat, and horse) call the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (tel. 610 489-1003) and do not approach the animal unless instructed to do so by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture or a city official.

### What should I do if a wild or unknown animal bites my pet?

- If possible to do without causing injury to yourself, trap the animal and take to PACCA/PAWS (tel. 267 385-3800, 111 West Hunting Park Avenue).

- PACCA/PAWS may have traps available for loan.
  - PACCA/PAWS may quarantine the animal for 10 days or submit the animal to the Philadelphia Department of Health's Laboratory for rabies testing.
  - If the animal tests negative for rabies or is still alive 10 days after biting your pet, your pet cannot develop rabies from that bite.
  - If the animal tests positive for rabies, your pet may develop rabies from that bite and needs to be quarantined (see directions below).
- Talk with your veterinarian about: 1) wound care and a booster rabies vaccine for your pet; 2) reporting the bite to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture; and 3) whether your pet needs to be quarantined.
- If the animal that bit your pet is **not** available for quarantine or observation:
- Your pet, if up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, may need to be quarantined and observed for 90 days.
    - If your pet is up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, they may receive a rabies booster vaccine at the beginning of the 90-day quarantine.
  - Your pet, if **not** current on their rabies vaccine, will need to be quarantined and observed for six months.
    - If your pet is **not** up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, your pet may receive the rabies vaccine at the beginning of or a month prior to completing the six-month quarantine.
- If you are unable to quarantine your pet, your pet may need to be euthanized and tested for rabies.
- Contact your pet's veterinarian and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (tel. 610 489-1003) if you have any questions.

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## **Bat FAQs**

### **What should I do if a bat bites me?**

- Go immediately to your health care provider (e.g., family doctor or emergency room).
- If possible, immediately wash out the wound well with soap and water.

- Talk with your health care provider about the risk of **rabies** infection.
- Talk with your health care provider about risk of tetanus (lock jaw) infection.
  - Find out if you are up-to-date on your tetanus vaccine.
- Talk with your health care provider about whether you need antibiotics.
  - Persons with diabetes, immunosuppressive diseases, and other chronic diseases are at particular risk from animal bites and scratches.

Contact your health care provider and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (tel. 215 685-6748) if you have any questions.

## What should I do if I find a bat in my house?

**Bats often are infected with rabies and can infect people and other animals through bites. NEVER PICK UP A BAT WITHOUT WEARING HEAVY LEATHER GLOVES, HEAVY CLOTHING AND FACE PROTECTION!**

- If the bat appears sickly and weak or is dead:
  - Remove the bat from your home and submit for possible rabies testing. Wear heavy leather gloves, heavy clothing, and face protection; trap the bat in a heavy towel; place it in a heavy cardboard box; tape the box shut; mark on the box that the bat is inside; and take the box with the bat to PACCA/PAWS.
  - **Please** warn the PACCA/PAWS staff if you are not sure if the bat is dead.
  - PACCA/PAWS may submit the bat to the Philadelphia Department of Public Health for rabies testing.
- If the bat is alive and was in your house where it **could have had** contact with you or a member of your family:
  - (Bats often are infected with rabies and are considered a risk for rabies infection when found in a room with a sleeping adult or when found in a room with a child or a mentally disabled person.)
  - Remove the bat from your home and submit for possible rabies testing. Wear heavy leather gloves, heavy clothing, and face protection; trap the bat in a heavy towel; place it in a heavy cardboard box; tape the box shut; mark on the box that the bat is inside; and take the box with the bat to PACCA/PAWS.
  - **Please** warn the PACCA/PAWS staff if you are not sure if the bat is dead.
  - **Do not allow the bat to fly away.**

- If the bat is alive and well and was only in your attic or someplace else where it could **not** have had contact with you or a member of your family:
  - Let the bat fly outside if you can do so without touching it; or
  - Remove the bat from your home: wear heavy leather gloves, heavy clothing, and face protection, trap the bat in a blanket, and move the blanket with the bat outside and let the bat fly away.

## What should I do if a bat bites my pet?

- If possible to do without causing injury to yourself, trap the bat and take to PACCA/PAWS (tel. 267 385-3800, 111 West Hunting Park Avenue).
  - **Please** warn the PACCA/PAWS staff if you are not sure if the bat is dead.
  - If the bat tests positive for rabies, your pet may develop rabies from that bite and needs to be quarantined (see directions below).
- Talk with your veterinarian about: 1) wound care and a booster rabies vaccine for your pet; 2) reporting the bite to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture; and 3) whether your pet needs to be quarantined.
- If the bat that bit your pet is **not** available for testing:
  - Your pet, if up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, may need to be quarantined and observed for 90 days.
    - If your pet is up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, they may receive a rabies booster vaccine at the beginning of the 90-day quarantine.
  - Your pet, if **not** current on their rabies vaccine, will need to be quarantined and observed for six months.
    - If your pet is **not** up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, your pet may receive the rabies vaccine at the beginning of or a month prior to completing the six-month quarantine.
- If you are unable to quarantine your pet, your pet may need to be euthanized and tested for rabies.
- Contact your pet's veterinarian and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (tel. 610 489-1003) if you have any questions.

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