

# RABIES FACT SHEET



Lenawee County  
**HEALTH**  
DEPARTMENT

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

## What is Rabies?

Rabies is a preventable viral infection spread through saliva and bites of infected animals. The virus infects the central nervous system causing brain disease and eventually death. If treatment is sought promptly, the person can prevent the onset of rabies but if symptoms begin it is 100% FATAL.

## What are the symptoms?

- Initial symptoms appear flu like; general fatigue, discomfort, fever or headache
- There may be discomfort, such as prickling or itching, at site of the bite.
- As the disease progresses, cerebral dysfunction, confusion, and agitation will turn into delirium, abnormal behavior, hallucinations, over salivation and insomnia.
- **Initial symptoms may take a while to appear. They usually end after 2 to 10 days. Once clinical symptoms have set in, the disease is almost always fatal and treatment is only supportive.**

## How can it be prevented?

- Vaccinate your pets.
- Maintain control of pets to reduce exposure to wildlife.
- Report stray or ill animals to animal control.

## How can it be spread?

- Most often through the saliva through the bite of a rabid mammal.
- Though rare in the US because of wide spread vaccination, dogs are also transmitters.
- It can occur in almost any mammal but Raccoons, skunks, foxes and coyotes and some bats are often transmitters of the disease.

## How it is treated?

- A rabies vaccine is available and is the only source of treatment. If given promptly and before symptoms it is effective in curing rabies and preventing the onset of symptoms.