

Animal Bites to Humans

If a rabid animal scratches me, should I be concerned?

Rabies is spread by bites that penetrate the skin. If a rabid animal scratches you with its tooth, that is considered to be a bite. However if an animal scratches you with its paw/nail, that is not how rabies is transmitted or spread.

What should I do when an animal bites me?

- Wash the wound immediately with soap and water
- Then go seek medical attention if needed
- Report the bite to VPH
- Call VPH with questions about the rabies risk of the incident
- Seek rabies PEP if recommended by VPH/your doctor

Are all animal bites reportable?

All animal bites to humans are reportable except for bites from rodents, squirrels, rabbits, birds and reptiles. Bites from opossums are reportable.

If a bite happened more than 10 days ago, do I still need to report it?

Yes, no matter when the bite happened, all bites are to be reported. Even if the quarantine period has passed.

If the victim of the bite is a minor/child, do I record their information?

Yes, always put accurate information for the victim. Information about the minor's parent/guardian can be placed in the 'Reporter' field or in the comments.

A stray dog is hit by car and a good Samaritan tries to pick up the dog but gets bit in the process. The dog is impounded by animal control but needs to be euthanized for irremediable suffering. What should I do?

1. Fill out the animal bite to human reporting form and email to VPH.
2. Be sure to include the info that the dog was euthanized the same day that it bit the person.
3. Decapitate the dog specimen that was euthanized and place into the VPH fridge for pick-up.
4. VPH will test the dog specimen for rabies. If it comes back rabies positive, VPH will contact the victim and let them know to start rabies treatment.

Any animal that dies or is euthanized DURING the quarantine period MUST be tested for rabies.

A stray cat bit someone that was petting him on the sidewalk. The cat was impounded and the 10 day quarantine was started from the date of the bite. The next day after impound, the cat's owner arrives at the shelter to claim her cat. Can you release this cat to the owner?

No. Animals under quarantine at the shelter cannot be released until the quarantine has been completed. They cannot be transferred to a home quarantine. A cat may be transferred to a vet clinic for care if needed but must remain at the vet clinic or return to the shelter immediately to finish out the quarantine.