



Rabies in St. Mary's County

Fact Sheet

What is rabies?

Rabies is a preventable viral disease of mammals most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The virus infects the central nervous system, causing encephalopathy and ultimately death.

Are we at risk?

We have seen an increase nationwide in the number of individuals bitten by domestic animals (cats and dogs) as well as wild animals. Animal bites alone account for well over 500,000 incidents each year. Countless more bites are not reported to authorities and go untreated. On average, about a dozen people die each year from dog bites. *This should not happen!*



Bite and Non-Bite Exposures need to be assessed to determine whether you or your loved ones have been placed at risk for Rabies Exposure. A Bite or Non-Bite (Scratch) Exposure where the skin has been broken and bled is potentially at risk for **rabies exposure**, especially if the site of injury comes in contact with the blood and/or saliva of an animal at risk or potentially exposed themselves through contact with another suspected at risk animal.

Bite and Non-Bite Exposures to potentially rabid animals involving humans and animals need to be reported immediately to appropriate local health department personnel. Per Maryland State Law [Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 10.06.02.04] an "individual who knows of an animal that has rabies or is suspected of having rabies or of an animal that has had a bite from or non-bite contact with an animal known to have or suspected of having rabies **shall report the facts immediately...**" to the local animal control authority for a proper risk assessment.

What can be done to prevent rabies?

1. Vaccinate animals.

- After the initial vaccination, a regular booster shot schedule should be determined by a veterinarian.
- Vaccines are available at your veterinarian's office or at the clinics hosted by the health department and the St. Mary's Animal Welfare League at the county fairgrounds. There is a small fee per dose at the clinic. Call 301-475-4321 for clinic schedule information.

2. Maintain safe conditions.

- Keeping pets under safe conditions such as on a leash or fenced in a yard will reduce the risk of rabies exposure.

3. Report incidents.

- If you see an animal exhibiting any symptoms of rabies, please report the sighting to Animal Control at 301-475-8018.
- If you are bitten or scratched by any animal, report the incident to the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Department at 301-475-8008.

Pets are our first line of protection against rabies. Protecting them protects us!

For more information:

- St. Mary's County Health Department, Environmental Health Services- 301-475-4321