

**Subject: Rabies Exposure**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Question: When should I pick up a cute wild animal pup? Answer: NEVER!**

Despite the onset of winter, one hard and fast rule never changes; don't ever pick up a wild animal with your bare hands, and without an adult, don't even get close enough to have physical contact. Even a cute little baby raccoon or fox can bite or scratch you. And with a bite or scratch from a wild animal comes the potential for rabies. We often don't think about rabies during the winter because we don't see as many bats or other wild animals as often as we do during the summer months. However, there have been more than 500 animal bites reported to the Health Department in the last 2 years, and a percentage of those will be wild animal bites, some will probably have rabies.

While most animal bites probably do not result in exposure to rabies, the possibility is always there and the results can be dangerous as well as deadly. Rabies is a virus that attacks the brain and nervous system. The rabies virus lives in the saliva of infected animals and is usually spread from animals to humans by a bite or scratch. If left untreated in humans, rabies is fatal. Many wild animals can carry rabies, including bats, skunks, foxes, coyotes and raccoons. If you see one of these animals, stay clear (especially from a skunk, for obvious reasons!).

### **Signs and symptoms of Rabies**

- Fever and/or Headache
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Hyper-Salivation (foaming at the mouth)
- Loss of Consciousness
- Convulsions

Without medical attention, these symptoms appear within 20 to 60 days. Once a person begins to experience rabies symptoms, death usually follows. If you think you have been bitten or exposed to an animal (domestic or wild) that you suspect has rabies, **don't wait!** Go to the nearest hospital emergency room or medical professional as soon as possible. Even though an animal may seem normal, it can still carry the rabies virus. Following exposure, the only way to avoid rabies' deadly symptoms is to get medical attention **IMMEDIATELY!!**

**Prevention/Treatment - CONSULT A MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL IMMEDIATELY!**

Rabies is treatable with a series of vaccines but they must be started in a timely manner.

For additional information about rabies, visit our website or the CDC at:

[www.bhsj.org/Clinic/CDFactSheets/rabies-qa-forwebsite.pdf](http://www.bhsj.org/Clinic/CDFactSheets/rabies-qa-forwebsite.pdf)

[www.cdc.gov/healthypets/diseases/rabies.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/diseases/rabies.htm)

[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/kidsrabies/FastFacts/rabies.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/kidsrabies/FastFacts/rabies.htm)