



April 30th, 2019

Protect Yourself and Your Pets from Rabies

As spring approaches the Barry Eaton District Health Department wants to remind residents some wild animals may carry rabies. Any mammal can get rabies. The most common wild animals that carry rabies are raccoons, skunks, bats, foxes, and coyotes. Although less common, cats, cattle, and dogs can also carry rabies. Now, largely because of the routine vaccination of pets against rabies and advancements in medicine, human deaths due to rabies are very rare. The disease is 100% preventable, but it is fatal to both humans and animals once symptoms start. Deaths due to rabies are mostly due to not seeking medical attention while not experiencing symptoms. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) an estimated 40,000 people in the United States receive rabies post-exposure treatment each year.

Transmission from bats is the most common cause of rabies in the U.S. For this reason, it is important to contact your health care provider to receive treatment if any possible exposure to a bat occurred. Bats have very small teeth, and a bite from a bat may not be felt. Any direct contact with a bat means a possible exposure to rabies. If possible, capture the bat so it can be tested for rabies. If you think you've been exposed to a bat, contact the Barry-Eaton County Health Department at (517) 541-2641 in Eaton County or (269) 798-4152 in Barry County to receive further assistance on steps to follow. Our website also contains information, including a video on how to safely capture a bat: <https://www.barryeatonhealth.org/bats-ticks-mosquitoes-and-animal-bites>.

Rabies can also be prevented by vaccinating pets. Michigan law requires that all dogs must have a current rabies vaccination. In addition, it is recommended that all cats and ferrets be vaccinated against rabies. Along with the statewide rabies vaccination law for dogs, all dogs must have a current Michigan dog license. Some cities also have laws on licensing dogs and cats; check with the city government for these requirements.

- Barry County Animal Control provides one or three year dog licenses, based on the rabies vaccination. Visit <http://bcshelter.tripod.com/dog-licensing-2.html> or call (269) 948-4885 for more information.
- Eaton County Animal Control dog licenses must be renewed each year. More information is available at <https://www.eatoncounty.org/departments/animal-control> or by calling (517) 543-5755.

Keep all pets under direct supervision while outdoors. This prevents contact between your pet and a wild animal that might be unvaccinated. If your pet is bitten, call your veterinarian for further instructions.

For more information on rabies, visit the CDC's rabies website found at <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/> or the Barry-Eaton District Health Department's website at www.barryeatonhealth.org or call (517) 541-2641 in Eaton County or (269) 798-4152 in Barry County.