

Rabies

Cause: Lyssavirus, a virus that infects/attacks the nervous system, causing an acute encephalitis in the brain.

Occurrence in Animals: All mammals, especially wild carnivores; rare in confined laboratory animals, may occur if they come in contact with rabid animal(s). Infected bats, monkeys, raccoons, foxes, skunks, cattle, wolves, dogs or cats provide the greatest risk to humans. Rabies may also spread through exposure to infected domestic farm animals, groundhogs, weasels and other wild carnivores. Rodents (mice, squirrels etc) are seldom infected.

Source of Infection in Animals: Saliva of infected animals.

Transmission: Bites from infected animals.

Observable Signs of Infection:

Animals:

- Two presentations; depressive and aggressive.
- Horses and cattle frequently present in depressive state, and rabies must be included in differential diagnosis of neurological disease in these species.

Humans:

- Local pain at the site of the bite
- Headache, fever, malaise
- Anxiety, agitation, paralysis, coma

Precautions:

- Take appropriate safety precautions when handling potentially rabid animals.
- Pre-exposure vaccination and monitoring of titers (levels of circulating antibodies in the blood) is available for all VMRCVM animal handlers, including students
- If accidental exposure should occur, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water, and seek medical attention immediately.
- The biting animals, or any other rabies suspect animal **must not be euthanized**, but must be held on campus and quarantined until its rabies status can be established.
- If the animal is already dead, it should be refrigerated but not frozen until given to appropriate authorities.

Reference: <http://www.research.cornell.edu/care/zoonoses.html>

Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/>
<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/vis/vis-rabies.pdf>
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/rabies.html>
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/rabies/doc/genguide.pdf>
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/msds-ftss/msds1242.html>
<http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/rabies/pdf>
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs099/en/print.html>