

## Protect your family and pets

- Have your dogs, cats, and ferrets vaccinated regularly.
- Do not let pets roam free.
- Enjoy wildlife from a distance.
- Teach children to stay away from animals they don't know.
- Cover garbage cans securely and do not leave pet food outside.
- Prevent bats from entering your home.
- Report bites and other animal exposures to your local health department, animal control agency, or police.

## Resources



**Maryland Department of Natural Resources**  
[dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants\\_wildlife/bats/batsinhome.aspx](https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants_wildlife/bats/batsinhome.aspx)

For more information, visit  
[health.maryland.gov/rabies](https://health.maryland.gov/rabies)



## Rabies Ready: What to Know Before a Bite



### Prevention and Health Promotion Administration

Infectious Disease Epidemiology and  
Outbreak Response Bureau

Center for Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases  
201 West Preston Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

Phone: 410-767-5649  
[health.maryland.gov](https://health.maryland.gov)



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### What is rabies?

Rabies is a viral disease that attacks the nervous system of all mammals. Rabies is nearly always fatal once symptoms appear. Raccoons, skunks, foxes, cats and bats are the most common rabid animals in Maryland.

### How is rabies spread?

Rabies virus is in the saliva of infected animals and is spread by biting. Being scratched or having saliva come in contact with eyes, nose, mouth, or open wounds may also be considered an exposure. Petting a rabid animal or coming into contact with blood, urine, feces or skunk spray of a rabid animal are not rabies exposures. The rabies virus is killed by heat, sunlight, drying, and many common detergents and disinfectants. Animals with rabies may spread the virus before they show signs of the disease.

### Can I tell if an animal has rabies?

Changes in an animal's behavior may indicate rabies. Wild animals may act friendly.

- Domestic animals may become aggressive.
- Rabid animals may stagger, drool, or become paralyzed.

### Protect yourself and your pets. Immunize!

In Maryland, dogs, cats, and ferrets must be vaccinated against rabies by 4 months of age. Rabies vaccines are also available for horses, cattle and sheep.

There is an effective treatment to prevent rabies in humans if given promptly after an exposure. Pre-exposure rabies vaccination is available for people who may have frequent contact with potentially rabid animals, such as veterinarians, animal control workers and international travelers.



### What if I had been bitten or exposed?

Get the name and address of the animal's owner.

- If there is no owner, remember what the animal looked like.
- If you are bitten by a wild animal, try to safely capture or confine it.
- If the animal must be killed, try not to damage its head.

Immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water.

- If available, also use a disinfectant.
- Seek medical attention promptly.
- Report the bite or exposure to your local animal control agency, health department or police.



Bite from a bat (CDC)

### What if my pet bites someone?

A dog, cat, or ferret that bites or exposes a person will be observed for ten days. If alive and healthy at the end of ten days, then the animal could not have transmitted rabies at the time of the bite.

### What if my pet has been bitten?

If your pet had contact with a wild animal, do not touch the wild zobtain the owner's name, address and telephone number.

- Avoid touching your pet with bare hands.
- Consult your veterinarian.
- Contact the local animal control agency, health department, or police.

### Be aware of bats.

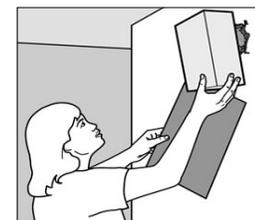
Most recent human cases of rabies in the U.S. have been caused by exposure to bats. When a person is exposed to a bat, the bat should be collected safely, if possible, and tested for rabies. Sometimes it is necessary to seek medical advice even in the absence of an obvious bite wound. If you or someone else in your home awakens to find a bat in the room, or any other situation in which a bat bite cannot be ruled out, call your local health department.

### How do I capture a bat?

The safest way to capture a bat is to use a wildlife cooperor or trapper. Your local health department or the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) can help find these professionals in your area.

### Use caution if you trap a bat yourself.

- Close doors and windows.
- Wait for the bat to land.
- Wearing heavy gloves, place a coffee can or box over the bat.
- Slide a piece of cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside.



©Bat Conservation International, batcon.org

- Firmly hold the cardboard in place against the container, turn it right side up, and tape the cardboard tightly to the container.
- Do not release the bat.
- Contact your local health department or animal control agency to determine if the bat should be tested for rabies.

### Bat-proof your home.

- If bats are not living in your home, you can bat-proof from September 1 to March 1.
- Install window screens and chimney caps.
- Close openings greater than 1/4 inch by 1/2 inch
- Your local health department and the DNR can provide more information about bat-proofing and bat exclusion.