**RABIES**

**What is rabies?**
Rabies is a disease of the nervous system caused by a virus. It usually results from a bite or contact with an animal with rabies.

**Who gets rabies?**
Although rabies among humans is rare in the United States, anyone can get rabies after an exposure to a rabid animal. Rabies is spread when the virus in an animal's saliva, or other body fluid, enters a person's open cuts, wounds, mouth, or eyes. The chance rabies will occur depends on the type of contact or "exposure."

**What is an exposure to rabies?**
There are two types of exposure (bite and non-bite). A bite is any puncture of the skin by teeth. A non-bite exposure is more difficult to define. Anyone who has any contact with a rabid animal should contact their doctor or public health immediately.

**What animals get rabies?**
Only mammals are infected with rabies, however, some mammals are more likely to be infected with rabies than others. For example, skunks, raccoons, bats, foxes, coyotes, and bobcats are more likely to be infected. All domestic animals such as dogs, cats, horses, and cattle can be infected. Small rodents, (such as squirrels, chipmunks, hamsters, guinea pigs, rats, and mice) rabbits, and hares almost never get rabies and have not been known to cause rabies.

**How can you tell if an animal is rabid?**
Although some animals with rabies look and act normal, most develop one of two forms of the disease. One form is "furious rabies" in which the infected animal is easily excited or angered. The other is "dumb rabies" in which the infected animal becomes paralyzed (has difficulty moving). Usually animals infected with rabies become irritable, restless, and nervous. If the animal in question is a dog, cat, horse, cattle or sheep, it can be quarantined for 10 days to see if it becomes symptomatic. If symptoms do develop, then the only way to tell if the animal has rabies is to kill it in a humane manner and test its brain for the rabies virus.

**How long can animals spread rabies?**
Cats and dogs can spread rabies up to 10 days before they become ill, as well as during their illness. The amount of time varies for other animals. For specific recommendations following an exposure, contact your doctor or public health.

**What should you do if you are exposed to a rabid animal?**
Immediately wash all bite wounds and scratches with soap and water. See a doctor as soon as possible. After an exposure to a proven or suspected rabid animal, rabies shots should be started as recommended by your doctor. For specific advice about receiving treatment contact a doctor or public health.

**How can rabies be prevented?**
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Here are ways you can protect yourself and others:
- Vaccinate dogs, cats, and other pets.
- Avoid contact with wild animals, and do not keep wild animals as pets.
- Report and control stray animals.

Where can I get more information?
- Your personal doctor or veterinarian.
- Your local health department, listed in your telephone directory
- The Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology (801) 538-6191