



Forsyth County Animal Services

What is rabies?

Rabies is a viral infection transmitted in the saliva of infected mammals. The virus enters the central nervous system of the host, causing inflammation of the brain and spinal cord that is almost always fatal.

Wildlife is the most important potential source of infection for both humans and domestic animals in the United States. Although all species of mammals are susceptible to rabies virus infection, it is most often found in raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes, and several species of insectivorous bats.

Who do I call if I think there is an animal with rabies in my neighborhood?

To report any particular incident contact Animal Services at 770-781-2138. If the call is placed outside of business hours you may contact non-emergency dispatch at 770-781-3087.

What animals carry rabies?

Carnivores such as fox, skunk, raccoon, bobcat, coyote, and wolf could have the rabies virus without showing any signs. These carnivores should not be handled even if injured. Any exposure to these animals should be reported to Animal Services so that a report can be made, and the animal should be tested.

Livestock such as cattle, horses, mules, donkeys, goats, swine, and sheep are not likely to have rabies. However, exposure to saliva from livestock infected with rabies is a concern. If at the time of the exposure the animal is clinically ill with signs suggestive of rabies, then treatment and testing must be weighed against the circumstances of exposure. Involve your doctor and the Georgia Poison Control Center in the decision of treatment and testing. Reports of livestock bites are not normally filed with Animal Services. Bats that bite or scratch a person or domestic animal carry a high risk of rabies exposure. If you or your pets have been bitten or scratched by a bat, contact the Animal Services Unit immediately. If you locate a bat inside your home and are not sure if a bite or scratch has occurred, contact Animal Services for guidance before disposing of the bat.

Dogs, cats, and ferrets should always be vaccinated against rabies. Although these animals are not born with rabies they can be exposed and cause a risk to humans. Larger animals such as dogs, cats and ferrets can survive an attack by a rabid animal and contract rabies. The state requires that all dogs, cats, and ferrets that bite or scratch an open wound be confined for a ten (10) day quarantine period. The ten-day period is necessary to observe the animal for any signs of rabies.

Small animals and rodents such as squirrels, hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils, chipmunks, rats, mice, gophers, moles, rabbits, and hares seldom survive an attack from a rabid animal and do not normally carry rabies. Any bite or scratch from these animals should be treated, but Animal Services does not take reports or confine these animals for rabies testing.

For additional information about a particular incident contact Animal Services at 770-781-2138.

What happens after I file a bite report?

An Animal Services Officer will contact the owner of the animal and inform them of the incident. The owner will be advised of the quarantine requirement for a vicious animal. The owner can choose to quarantine their animal at the Forsyth County Animal Shelter for the 10-day quarantine period or at a veterinarian's office. The owner must comply with the quarantine. If the animal is quarantined at a vet clinic, Animal Services must be notified of the vet clinic's location and Animal Services will contact them to ensure the 10-day quarantine is followed.

If the owner requests their animal be housed at Forsyth County Animal Shelter, it will be placed in an isolation area for the 10-day quarantine period. During that time employees of the Animal Shelter will care for the animal. If the animal cannot be immediately located, humane animal traps will be placed in the area of the incident.

If an animal attack occurs, and there is no injury, a citation will be issued to the animal's owner. The 10-day quarantine will not be required.

How can I protect myself and my pets?

- Ensure pets get rabies vaccine regularly.
- Keep pets on your property.
- Don't leave garbage or pet food outside; it may attract wild or stray animals.
- Stay away from wild, sick, hurt, or dead animals; don't pick up or move sick or hurt animals.
- It's illegal and dangerous to keep wild animals like raccoons, rabbits, and foxes as pets.
- Teach your children not to go near, tease, or play with wild animals or stray dogs and cats.

Bats are of great concern for potential rabies. Use care and protection to contain any bats found indoors and contact us for guidance on rabies testing.

Rabies can be transmitted from an infected animal to humans. Prompt medical attention and treatment for rabies exposure may be needed after exposure to an infected animal. Without treatment, rabies infections in humans are nearly 100 percent fatal. If you have an encounter with an animal that you suspect has rabies, please call animal services at 770-781-2138.

Wildlife:

Wildlife abounds in Forsyth and should be left undisturbed in their natural habitat.

Wild animals, such as raccoons, foxes, skunks, bats, or coyotes, may be dangerous and carry rabies, even though they may not exhibit visible signs or symptoms. Do not try to handle or approach wild animals.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources is a valuable resource for options on nuisance wildlife, fact sheets, wildlife rehabilitator information, tips on managing land for wildlife, guides on rabies, and much more. For more information visit GeorgiaWildlife.com.