



City of Meriden, Connecticut

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



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Public Health Summer Safety Series – Week 2: **Rabies – Know the Facts**

(May 30, 2017) – With warmer weather on its way, the Meriden Department of Health and Human Services would like to remind residents to brush up on rabies information.

Rabies is caused by a virus that is spread from animal to animal, or from animal to person, by the bite or scratch of an animal that has the disease. Any mammal can get rabies, including raccoons, skunks, foxes, bats, dogs, and cats. Even cattle and people can get rabies. Animals infected with rabies may act differently than healthy animals – they may have excessive drooling (“foaming at the mouth”), be aggressive, or look generally ill.

Rabies affects the nervous system, which controls everything you do – from breathing to walking. The early symptoms of rabies in people are similar to that of many other illnesses, including fever, headache, and general weakness or discomfort. As the disease progresses, more specific symptoms appear and may include insomnia, anxiety, confusion, slight or partial paralysis, excitation, hallucinations, agitation, hypersalivation (increase in saliva), difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia (fear of water).

The good thing is that rabies infection can be 100% prevented. Follow these steps to protect your pets – and yourself.

- Vaccinate your pets, and keep those vaccinations up-to-date.
- When your pets are outside, keep them under direct supervision.
- Spay or neuter your pets to reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or vaccinated regularly.
- Avoid contact with wild animals – do not touch them, feed them (even if they look hungry), or approach them in any way.
- Do not leave food outside – it could attract unwanted animals to your home. Make sure your yard is neat and clean.
- If you are bit or scratched by any animal, wash the wound with soap and water and seek the care of a doctor. Your doctor, possibly in consultation with our office, will decide if you need a rabies vaccination. Decisions to start vaccination, known as postexposure prophylaxis (PEP), will be based on your type of exposure and the animal you were exposed to. It’s important to remember that rabies is a medical urgency but not an emergency. Decisions should not be delayed.
- The same goes for your pet – if they are bit or scratched by a wild or neighborhood pet, take them to the veterinarian as soon as possible.



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- If you are concerned about wild animals in your neighborhood, contact the Meriden Animal Control office at (203) 235-4179.

For more information on rabies please visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/rabies. Residents can also call the Meriden Health and Human Services Department. Please call (203) 630-4226 with questions.

Written by Desiree Rondeau, Public Health Intern