

## What to do if you suspect rabies?

Rabies is a notifiable disease. Any person who suspects that an animal is affected with or has been exposed to rabies must contact The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine immediately, by contacting their local Regional Veterinary Office.

## What happens if rabies is suspected in an animal in Ireland?

- The affected animal must be euthanased to reduce the risk of further spread and for rabies testing
- All in-contact humans must be traced and assessed by Health Services
- All in-contact animals must be traced and assessed by a Veterinary Inspector of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Animals considered of *high risk of exposure* (e.g. bitten by suspect animal) must be placed in isolation immediately

## In the event of rabies outbreak in Ireland

- Have your pet vaccinated against rabies
- Avoid contact with stray or unknown animals and wildlife
- While outside keep your dog on a lead
- Report any animals acting suspiciously immediately

## What to do if you are bitten by a dog?



- Thoroughly wash the wound with soap and running water for 15 minutes
- Seek immediate medical advice
- If you suspect the dog has rabies, it has a history of recent travel or import, or its history is unknown:
  - Isolate the animal if it is safe to do so (or note what the animal looks like)
  - Contact your local Dog Warden or An Garda Síochána

## Further information

In the event of an outbreak, further information will be provided in the press and other media, and on the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's website at:

[www.agriculture.gov.ie](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie)



Information on rabies September 2016



# RABIES

## Information Leaflet Pet Owners

## Introduction

Rabies is a very serious viral disease which affects the nervous system of humans and animals. It is nearly always fatal, and is currently responsible for an estimated 70,000 human deaths a year worldwide (1 every 10 minutes).

## Affected species

Rabies mainly affects carnivores (dogs, cats or foxes), but can affect any mammal or human.

## Geographical distribution of the disease

Rabies is endemic in 150 countries/territories worldwide, with the majority of cases occurring in developing countries. Ireland is fortunate to be rabies free since 1903. However recent cases in pets and wildlife in Europe highlight the need to remain vigilant and prevent its introduction into Ireland.

## Possible routes of introduction into Ireland

The main route of introduction into Ireland would be the importing of an infected unvaccinated animal. In addition animals travelling abroad could be exposed to rabies via contact with infected dogs and cats or infected wildlife (e.g. fox, badger, bat and raccoon).

## How is it transmitted?

Humans or pets can become infected by close contact with infected saliva via bites or scratches from rabies infected animals.

## Measures that you can take to protect your pets from rabies

If you are travelling with pets within the EU (including the UK) or importing pets into Ireland, it is a legal requirement all pets must be vaccinated against rabies. Full details can be found on the Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/pets/>

While abroad avoid wild animals known to be rabies carriers (e.g. fox, badger, bat and raccoon).



## Common clinical signs of rabies

### Early signs include:

- **behaviour changes:**
  - friendly animals may become cautious
  - shy animals may become bold
- dogs may excessively seek attention and lick their owners
- hypersensitivity to noise or light

### These can be followed by:

- increased aggression - dogs may attack objects, animals and handlers
- eyes with a staring expression
- drooping lower jaw and excessive saliva production
- itching
- thirst

### The final stages include:

- weak muscles, especially legs and tail
- difficulty swallowing
- drooping eyelids
- saliva frothing at the mouth
- general paralysis, then convulsions and coma before death within 3-8 days of first signs