

Rabies, your pets...

and the role of the Public Health Inspector



Know the facts

The Durham Regional Health Department is investigating a bite/scratch incident involving an animal under your care.

The Health Protection and Promotion Act requires that the animal, as described in the "ORDER OF A PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR", be confined for 10 days from the date of the bite/scratch incident, regardless of the animal's rabies vaccination status.

Under NO circumstances should the confined animal be released or destroyed during the confinement period. When an animal survives and is healthy at the end of the confinement period it is an indication that the animal was not capable of transmitting the rabies virus at the time of the bite/scratch. Failure to obey the "ORDER OF A PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR" can result in fines of up to \$5,000.00 per day.



Rabies

Rabies is an infectious and contagious disease which attacks the brain and causes the death of the infected person or animal.

Rabies is caused by a virus. This virus is found in the saliva of infected warm blooded mammals, for example: foxes, raccoons, bats, skunks, dogs, cats and livestock. If someone is exposed to the rabies virus – such as through a bite or scratch from an infected animal – they can receive post-exposure treatment. This treatment is highly effective at preventing the disease when given as soon as possible after exposure.



The virus is present in the saliva of an infected animal before symptoms of the disease begin. Therefore, it may be hard to tell if an animal has rabies just by looking at it. The virus must have time to travel through the nerves and then to the brain before a change can be seen in the animal's behaviour. A rabid animal may exhibit one of the following forms of rabies:

Furious Rabies – an infected animal may act very aggressive, or anxious, and may attack or bite without provocation.

Dumb Rabies – an infected wild animal may act unusually tame or friendly. Pets may seem very tired or shy.

Physical symptoms may include weight loss, lack of coordination, paralysis, drooling and inevitably, death.

Pet owners' responsibility during the confinement period

1. Keep your pet confined on your property, away from other people and animals.
2. Keep your pet indoors at night.
3. If your pet dies, escapes, is "Dog-Napped" or becomes ill at any time, report this immediately to the Durham Region Health Department at 1-800-841-2729.
4. **If your dog's/cat's rabies vaccination is not up to date, make arrangements with your veterinarian to have it vaccinated immediately AFTER it is released from confinement by the Health Department.**

Note: Pet owners in Ontario are required, by law, to ensure that all dogs and cats, 3 months of age or older, have a current rabies vaccination certificate.



The role of the Public Health Inspector (PHI)

1. The initial visit by the PHI involves an accurate identification and visual check of the animal involved. The rabies vaccination status of the animal must be confirmed.
2. The requirements for the confinement period will be explained to the person responsible for the care and custody of the confined animal.
3. There will be a final visit to observe and release the animal from confinement at the end of the 10 day period.
4. The victim of the bite/scratch incident will be advised regarding the health of the animal at the end of the confinement period.



Durham Health Connection Line
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729
Dial 311 (within regional limits)
durham.ca/rabies

