

North Carolina Law

The State of North Carolina requires current rabies vaccinations for all dogs, cats, and ferrets living anywhere in the state or even visiting from elsewhere.

Rabies vaccines can only be given by a veterinarian or certified rabies vaccinator. This is unlike other vaccines which may be purchased and given by the owner of the pet. Pet owners should ensure they always have a current copy of their pet's rabies certificate which needs to include the date the vaccine was given, where the vaccine was given, and for how long the vaccine is valid (one or three years). A rabies tag alone is not sufficient proof that an animal has a current vaccine.

If you are traveling with your pet, be sure to check the requirements of both your destination and the method of travel (for example, airlines may have special requirements).

A dog, cat, or ferret is not considered currently vaccinated and protected against rabies exposure until 28 days after the initial vaccination.

What To Do If You Are Exposed To Rabies

If you are exposed to a potentially rabid animal, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water, and seek medical attention immediately. A health care provider will care for the wound and will assess the risk for rabies exposure. The following information will help your health care provider assess your risk:

- the geographic location of the incident
- the type of animal that was involved
- how the exposure occurred (provoked or unprovoked)
- the vaccination status of the animal (if known)
- whether the animal can be safely captured and tested for rabies

Steps taken by the health care practitioner will depend on the circumstances of the bite. Your health care practitioner should consult state or local health departments, veterinarians, or Animal Services agencies to make an informed assessment of the incident and to request assistance. The important factor is that you seek care promptly after you are bitten by any animal.

Protecting Your Pets & Family

- Keep vaccinations up-to-date for all dogs, cats and ferrets. This requirement is important not only to keep your pets from getting rabies, but also to provide a barrier of protection to you if your pet is bitten by a rabid wild animal.
- Keep your pets under direct supervision so they do not come in contact with wild animals. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately.
- Call your local Animal Services agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood. They may be unvaccinated and could be infected by the disease.
- Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for.

Avoid Direct Contact with Unfamiliar Animals

- Enjoy wild animals (raccoons, skunks, foxes) from afar. Do not handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Do not try to nurse sick animals to health. Call a local wildlife rehabilitator for assistance.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. "Love your own, leave other animals alone" is a good principle for children to learn.
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas, where they might come in contact with people and pets.
- When traveling abroad, avoid direct contact with wild animals and be especially careful around dogs in developing countries.

Contact Information

NC Wildlife Resources Commission
(statewide)

(866) 318-2401

Wildlife Rehab

(Forsyth County)

(336) 785-0912

We have low-cost clinics for rabies vaccines multiple times throughout the year. Please check our website and/or follow us on Facebook for the most up to date information.

Rabies Information

