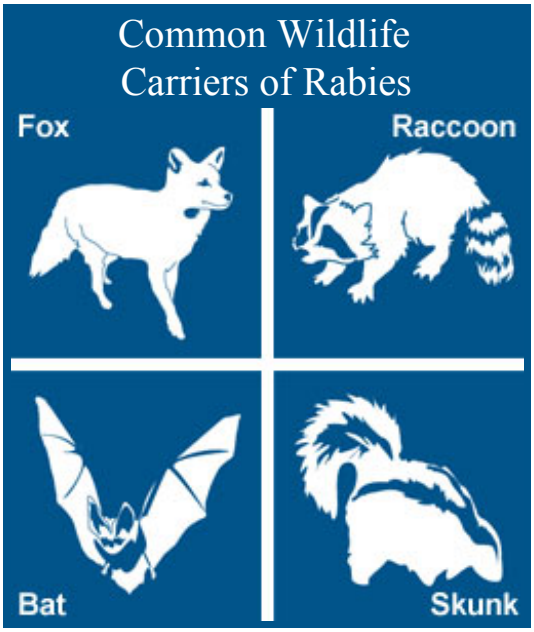
Rabies: Understanding This Still-Active Disease

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

All warm-blooded animals and humans can contract the rabies virus. Domestic cats that are allowed to roam outdoors are more susceptible to contracting the virus. There is no treatment for rabies, and the instances of unvaccinated cats surviving the infection are extremely rare. While vaccination programs are highly effective, rabies remains a serious health threat. It is essential for cat owners to take vaccination recommendations seriously to ensure the protection and safety of their families and pets.



The transmission of the rabies virus occurs through a bite from an infected animal. Common carriers include skunks, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, and bats. The virus is shed in saliva, and when a rabid animal bites a cat, the virus spreads through the nervous system and moves to the brain in two to six weeks. After the virus reaches the brain, the disease progresses through three phases: prodromal, furious, and paralytic.

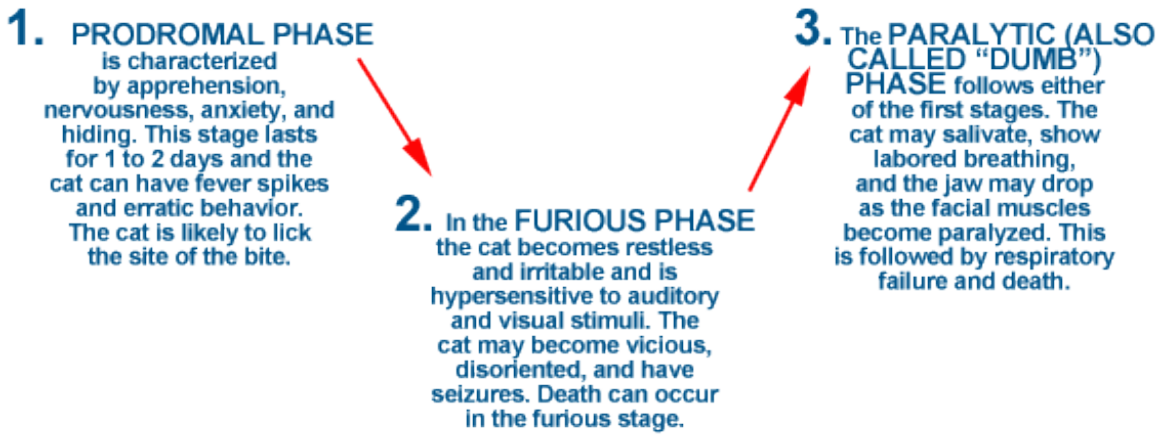
Any cat bitten or scratched by an animal in the wild is considered exposed to rabies. Vaccinated cats need to be closely observed for 45 days. The only reliable means of determining if an animal (wild or domestic) is infected with rabies is to examine the animal's brain tissue, so an unvaccinated feline is placed in strict isolation for six months or euthanized.

Since rabies is highly preventable through vaccination, restricting your cat from wandering, preventing contact with wild animals, and proper vaccinations are essential safeguards.

The laws regarding rabies vaccination and biting animals are regional and variable. It is important to consult your veterinarian or local animal control department for up-to-date information.

*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*

THE PHASES OF RABIES



*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*