



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Health Department Urges Prompt Reporting of Animal Bites
Timely Reports Crucial to Preventing Transmission of Rabies

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Health Department urges timely reporting of animal bites to avoid transmission of rabies, which is 100% preventable when prompt, appropriate medical care is provided.

“Animal bites can be reported to the Health Department 24 hours a day, seven days week by calling **412-687-ACHD (2243)**. If you are bitten, please wash the wound immediately with soap and water and seek medical evaluation,” said Health Director Dr. Karen Hacker.

An important factor in deciding how someone is treated is whether the animal can be found and held for observation or tested for rabies. If the biting animal is a pet, please get the owner’s name phone number.

The rabies virus is transmitted to humans when it is introduced into a bite wound, open cuts in the skin or onto mucous membranes such as those inside the mouth or on the eyes.

While any mammal can get rabies, the most common carriers are bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes and coyotes. Stray and feral cats also may have rabies. Domestic dogs and cats may have rabies too if they are not up to date with their vaccinations, so make sure your pets are current on their rabies shots.

Residents are advised to avoid contact with all wild animals. Not every rabid animal acts aggressively or foams at the mouth. Some could appear tired or very tame. Also, do not attract wild animals to your property. Keep trash cans secured and do not leave pet food outdoors.

Bites by some animals, such as bats, can inflict minor injury and be difficult to detect. For that reason, if you find a bat in your home – especially in the bedroom – do not dispose of it or let it go before contacting the Health Department for an evaluation and risk assessment.

Nearly 2,700 animal bites were reported in Allegheny County from January, 2013 through June, 2014. Most of the bites involved dogs (69%) or cats (25%). Bats accounted for 2% and raccoons 1%. More bites were reported in the summer than any other season, but at least 100 bites were reported each month. Age groups were affected as follows: up to 19 years of age, 26% of bites; 20 to 39, 32%; 40 to 59, 26%.

Twelve animals in Allegheny County have tested positive for rabies this year – 5 bats, 2 raccoons, 2 groundhogs, 2 cats and 1 skunk.

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