

## Animal Bites & Rabies

### Why Report?

Rabies is endemic in wildlife in San Mateo County, and can affect domestic animals as well. Any bite that breaks the skin, and any exposure of mucus membranes or broken skin to saliva of potentially rabid animals, can cause human rabies. Prophylaxis with Rabies Immune Globulin and Rabies Vaccine is effective at preventing this deadly disease.

### Bats and Rabies

Bats are important reservoirs for rabies, and their bites are often imperceptible. Therefore, if there is any contact with a bat or if a bat is found in a room with children or where people are sleeping, rabies prophylaxis should be considered. Call the DCP or the health officer on call to discuss specific cases.

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### Dog Bite Facts

**Number of licensed dogs in San Mateo County in 2004: 55,452**

**Number of dog bites reported in San Mateo County in 2004: 619**

**Fewer than half of these dogs had been vaccinated against rabies!**

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Many more people are bitten by other animals, wild or domestic. Because bites may spread rabies, health care providers must report all animal bites.



### Testing Animals for Rabies

The Public Health Laboratory performs rabies testing on domestic or wild animals at risk for rabies, such as bats, skunks, foxes, raccoons, and opossums. Animals like mice, rats, gophers, rabbits and squirrels are unlikely to transmit rabies. As testing involves examination of the brain tissue, it's necessary to euthanize the animal to perform rabies testing. Please call Disease Control and Prevention at 573-2346 to discuss whether testing is indicated.

Rabies testing is done at least weekly. Additional testing will be done on recommendation of a public health physician. Dead animals may be brought in between 8 am and 4 pm, Monday through Friday.

### Non-owned Animals

The Peninsula Humane Society will attempt to catch stray animals that have bitten humans and bring them to the lab for testing.

### General Information on Human Rabies

Incubation period is usually 3-8 weeks, rarely as short as 9 days or as long as 7 years; depends on the severity of the wound, site of the wound in relation to the richness of the nerve supply and its distance from the brain, amount and strain of virus introduced, protection provided by clothing and other factors. Prolonged incubation periods have occurred in prepubertal individuals.

**Report all animal bites immediately to:**

**Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA**

**12 Airport Boulevard  
San Mateo, CA 94401**

**(650) 348-7891**

**(650) 340-7022**

**For questions on management of animal bites, or if you suspect rabies disease, call:**

**Disease Control and Prevention**

**(650) 573-2346**

**(650) 363-4981 for after-hours emergencies)**

**Other useful numbers:**

To obtain Rabies Vaccine, call  
**1-800-CHIRON** or

**1-800-VACCINE**

For Rabies Immune Globulin (RIG), call

**1-800-VACCINE** or

**1-800-243-4153**

### Public Health Lab

**225 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Room 113**

**San Mateo, CA 94403**

**(650) 573-2500**

**... for questions about where and when to bring an animal for testing.**

**See next page for guidelines for determining whether rabies vaccine and RIG (Rabies Immune Globulin) are needed for a patient.**