Rabies in the US Stats & Facts



FACTS

1. Post-exposure treatment is available in almost every emergency department across the country. For people who haven’t received the rabies vaccine, treatment includes a one-time dose of immune globulins and four doses of the vaccine over the course of two weeks.
2. Oral rabies vaccines for wild animals have been used to control the spread of the disease from raccoons and coyotes. And was successful in preventing the spread of raccoon rabies westward.
3. In the United States today, human fatalities are rare but typically occur in people who do not seek prompt medical care. Lack of awareness of the risk of rabies is thought to be an important factor. This is of particular concern for bat bites, since bats can have small teeth and leave bite marks that are the size of the tip of a pencil.

STATS

- In 2018, about 55,000 people in the United States received post-exposure treatment for possible rabies, though some may not have had contact with an infected animal. Even if the animal couldn’t be captured to confirm rabies, people who were bitten by a suspicious animal got post-exposure treatment because the disease is so deadly.
- From 1960 to 2018, 127 human rabies cases were reported in the United States, with roughly a quarter resulting from dog bites received during international travel. Of the infections acquired in the United States, 70% were attributed to bat exposures.
- The number of rabies-related human deaths in the United States declined during the twentieth century, from more than 100 annually in the early 1900’s to just one or two per year since 1960.
- Every year, more than 60,000 people come in contact with potentially rabid animals in the United States and receive vaccination.1,2 Wild animals were the carriers of rabies in 92% of cases reported in 2013.
- Cases of human rabies cases in the United States are rare, with only 1 to 3 cases reported annually. Twenty-five cases of human rabies have been reported in the United States in the past decade (2009-2018). Seven of these infections were acquired outside of the U.S. and its territories.
- Each year, hundreds of thousands of animals need to be placed under observation or be tested for rabies, and between 30,000 to 60,000 people need to receive rabies post exposure prophylaxis.

- In the United States, the culprit behind most rabies cases has shifted from dogs to bats. The flying mammals now cause 7 out of 10 US rabies cases, according to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Although wildlife exposure is the most common cause of rabies death in the United States, globally, infected dogs cause 98% of the 59,000 human deaths each year.
- Of the more than 1 million dogs imported to the United States every year, 10% come from countries with a high risk of rabies. There have been three US rabies cases reported from imported dogs since 2015.
- Approximately 5,000 animal rabies cases are reported annually to CDC. More than 90% of those cases occur in wildlife. This marks a dramatic change in the types of animals reported as rabid since 1960, when the majority of cases were in domestic animal species, primarily dogs. The principal rabies reservoir hosts in the United States today include bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes.