



# Rabies

## What is Rabies?

Rabies is an extremely dangerous viral disease of animals that can also be transmitted to humans. **There is no effective treatment for rabies in animals and all cases end in death!**

Rabies can occur in all livestock, dogs and cats and many wild animals, especially dog-like animals such as foxes and jackals. Birds, including poultry are not affected. In Afghanistan, rabies occurs most commonly in dogs and is usually spread by rabid dogs biting other animals or people.



## How do animals become infected with Rabies?

The rabies virus is spread by contact with saliva from an infected animal, through bites or scratches, abrasions, or cuts in the skin. Livestock may be exposed during grazing or roaming when a rabid animal bites them. Because people can be exposed to rabies by contact with wild or domestic animals, avoid "suspicious" animals.

## What are the signs of Rabies?

One of the most dangerous and difficult problems with rabies is that the clinical signs are variable. Rabies should be suspected whenever an animal shows an unexplained change in attitude or behavior, or a change in function of the nervous system.

- Changes in an animals' attitude or behavior can include:
  - uncharacteristic aggressiveness (growling, attacking, biting, or charging into walls or fences)
  - resistance to being touched or handled
  - excessive fear
  - unusual quietness or depression
- Changes in nervous system function may include an inability to swallow. This may appear as a refusal of food or water and excessive salivation or drooling.
- Other changes that may be seen include:
  - signs of incoordination when walking (stumbling, falling, or leaning)
  - inability to rise due to paralysis of one or more legs
  - difficulty urinating or defecating if the necessary muscles become paralyzed.

In the later stages, affected animals may be unable to rise and may show generalized convulsions before dying.

## What can we do to control Rabies in Afghanistan?

**Rabies can be prevented in animals by vaccination.** All dogs and cats should be vaccinated against rabies at 4-6 months of age and then with regular boosters on an annual basis. Valuable livestock such as cattle and horses should also be vaccinated annually. Many farmers will find the cost of rabies vaccine too expensive to vaccinate their sheep and goats. However, in areas where rabies is commonly known to occur, this also may be advisable.

**IMPORTANT: Wash all bite wounds immediately. Seek medical attention if bitten by an animal suspected to have Rabies.**

Developed from "Farmer Sheet on Anthrax", Dutch Committee for Afghanistan <http://www.dca-vet.nl/>, by H. Zornetzer 2007

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