



Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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Exposed to rabies? Call your doctor and public health!

(Mason City) – Due to recent news of a rabies exposure in North Iowa, the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health would like to remind you of a few important things should you potentially be exposed to rabies. First, it is critical to seek medical attention if a potential rabies exposure has occurred. Once you seek medical attention, you must report any exposures to your local health department. Recognizing risks and knowing what to do if you are exposed is extremely important.

Rabies is a disease of the brain caused by a virus. Exposure to rabies occurs when the saliva of an infected animal comes in contact with a person's mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth) or by a break in the skin, often caused by a bite from the animal. Rabies in humans is 100% fatal, but also 100% preventable if treated immediately and appropriately.

Many of us assume it is easy to identify whether or not an animal is rabid by their aggressive behavior and drooling mouth, but that is not always the case. Some animals show normal behaviors where others may act aggressive. This is why it is important to notify your health department of the potential exposure so the animal can be quarantined and observed for signs of rabies and/or sent to a lab for rabies testing.

Most people will know they have had a potential exposure because they have been bitten by the animal, but some exposures may be hard to identify. For instance, a bat bite can be so small that the individual may not know they have been bitten. If there is any chance you may have been in contact with an animal that could have rabies, it is important to seek medical care to determine whether a true exposure has occurred.

Vaccinating your pets against rabies is the best way to reduce human exposure. Be sure to avoid contact with all wildlife and stray animals. If a bat is found in the same room with a sleeping person, an unattended child, an intoxicated person, or anyone who is unable to confirm they have not been bitten, contact your local public health department and/or your medical provider. Also, if your pet has been in contact with an animal that might have rabies, contact your veterinarian right away.

If you have additional questions about rabies or possible exposures, please visit our website at www.cghealth.com or call us at 641-421-9300.

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