

# World Rabies Day

Join us in recognizing September 28 as [World Rabies Day](#)! On this day, we raise awareness about the world's deadliest infectious disease, which is 100% preventable. An estimated 50,000 human deaths occur annually across the world. Here in Texas, cases occur in both wild and domestic animals every year.



Photo credit: CDC

## What is rabies?

Rabies is a virus that affects the central nervous system. It leads to death once clinical signs appear. Rabies can spread from animals to people or from animal to animal. Rabies is completely preventable with prompt recognition and treatment.

## How is it transmitted?

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with the saliva or brain/nervous system tissue of an infected animal. The most common way a person can get rabies is from the bite of a rabid animal and not receiving appropriate medical care after a potential exposure.

People can also become infected when saliva is in direct contact with:

- Broken skin
- Mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth)
- Scratches
- Abrasions
- Open wounds

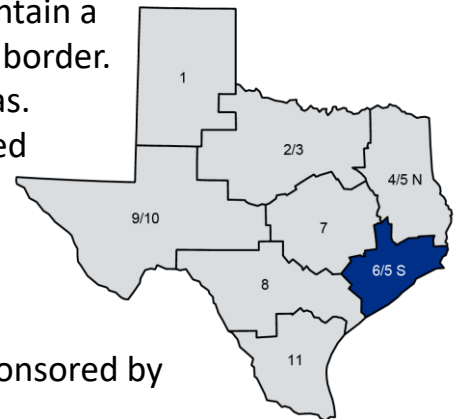
## What animals can get rabies?

Rabies affects all mammals, including humans. Over 90% of reported cases of rabies in animals occur in wildlife. In Texas, the five animals considered high-risk for carrying rabies are bats, raccoons, skunks, coyotes, and foxes. Domestic animals, like dogs, cats, and ferrets, are at lower risk, especially when current on their rabies vaccines.

## How does Texas combat rabies?

The DSHS Zoonosis Control Program conducts rabies risk assessments, participates in community outreach, provides training courses for animal control officers, and more. Once a year, DSHS drops oral vaccines from an airplane to control rabies in wildlife year through the [Oral Rabies Vaccination Program](#) (ORVP). The ORVP helps to maintain a zone of vaccinated coyotes and gray foxes along the U.S.-Mexico border. This helps keep rabies variants from being reintroduced into Texas.

[Rabies testing](#) is an important tool for surveillance. It is performed at four labs in the state, including the DSHS Rabies Lab in Austin and the City of Houston Rabies Lab. Texas DSHS also hosts a [rabies poster contest](#) as a fun and creative way to educate youth about rabies risks, respecting wildlife from a distance, and reporting potential exposures. Prizes for the 2024 contest are sponsored by the [Zach Jones Memorial Fund](#).



## Rabies Awareness and Prevention Poster Contest

Texas' annual statewide [Rabies Awareness and Prevention Poster Contest](#) is open to students from Kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade and youth organizations so long as an adult facilitator sends the submissions. Deadline for poster submission is **April 1, 2024**, and resources are listed below.

- [Entry Form](#)
- [Contest Instructions for Adult Facilitators](#) (K-12<sup>th</sup>)
- [Student Information and Instructions](#) (K-8<sup>th</sup>)
- [Student Information and Instructions](#) (High School)
- [Rabies Activity Sheet](#) (K-5<sup>th</sup>)



2nd Place: 6th - 8th grade  
First Colony Middle School  
Sugarland, Texas

## What can you do to prevent rabies?

There are many ways to protect your family and pets against rabies:

- [Vaccinate your pets](#). It is required for all dogs and cats by 4 months of age in the state of Texas.
- Leave stray animals alone, even if it looks sick or injured. Report the situation to your local animal control agency.
- [Don't feed wild animals](#).
- Call your jurisdiction's [Animal Control Agency](#) to report any animal bite .
- Contact the Region 6/5S [Zoonosis Control Program](#) for a rabies risk assessment.
- Seek medical care after a bite or exposure.

## Bats and wildlife at school

We frequently receive reports of bats in schools. It is important to know what to do if you see a bat or other wildlife on campus.

1. Don't attempt to capture it.
2. Remove students, staff, and visitors from the area.
3. Notify a school official onsite.
4. Identify any contact or exposures.
5. Report to animal control.
6. Contact our program for resources and rabies risk assessment.

Be sure to check out [Bats in Schools](#) resources provided by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and [Texas DSHS](#) . For more information on rabies, you can visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) , or the [World Health Organization](#) .

**For more information contact:**  
**PHR 6/5S Zoonosis Program**

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**DSHS Southeast Texas**

*Public Health Region 6/5 S Serving You*



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