

NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday, February 9, 2010



For immediate release

Protect Yourself: Rabies Information

Several confirmed cases of rabies, (a serious disease of the nervous system caused by a virus) have been reported throughout the Sunrise Health Region, most recently in the Buchanan area. Rabies in Saskatchewan most commonly occurs in animals such as skunks, bats, but may also be found in domestic pets such as dogs, cats, farm animals such as cattle and horses and other wild animals like raccoons.

Exposure to rabies is considered to have occurred when the saliva or other potentially infectious material of a rabid animal is introduced in to a person through a bite or scratch. Rabies can also be introduced through abrasions or cuts on an individual's skin or by the spraying of saliva or other infectious material on the mucous membranes of an individual. Signs and symptoms of rabies can occur quickly over several days and include rapidly progressive central nervous system symptoms which may include anxiety, difficulty swallowing and seizures; without treatment, rabies will cause death.

Animals with rabies show a variety of signs including depression, paralysis which might occur in a number of areas including the face or neck, hiding, and wild animals losing fear of humans. Other signs of rabid animals are those that only come out at night are being seen during the day and aggressiveness which may include attacking objects or other animals.

If you or someone you know is bitten by an animal that you suspect may have rabies, flush the wound with plenty of soap and water, confine the animal, place it under observation if possible and seek immediate medical attention, even if you think the bite is minor. Individuals exposed to rabies will have their level of risk determined by their physician may be treated by receiving the rabies vaccine.

To minimize your risk of contracting rabies:

- treat unknown or wild animals with caution
- do not approach or touch a wild animal, especially if it appears to be sick
- teach children not to touch or feed animals that they do not know
- have your pets vaccinated yearly for rabies

For information on animal bites, contact the Sunrise Public Health office at 786-0600 or the HealthLine at 1-877-800-0002. If you are bitten by an animal that is suspected of having rabies, immediately contact your nearest emergency medical centre for treatment. To report an animal that is suspected to have rabies, contact the Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency at (306) 780-5180.

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For information about this news release, please contact Sharon Tropin, Director of Communications 306.786.0144.