

## What is rabies?

Rabies is a deadly virus that is transmitted by bites from an infected animal. Rabies can be prevented if treated promptly before symptoms develop. Left untreated, rabies is nearly always fatal. Although rabies in humans is very rare in the United States today, up to 40,000 people each year receive preventive treatment following an exposure.

In Tennessee and elsewhere in the U.S., the number of rabies cases in domestic animals has declined dramatically due to mandatory vaccination laws for dogs and cats. However, rabies among wildlife (especially skunks, bats, and raccoons) has become more prevalent. The higher the incidence of [rabies in wildlife](#), the greater the risk to domestic animals who act as a buffer zone between wildlife and humans.

There were 129 cases of rabies in Tennessee in 2008, including 67 skunks, 28 raccoons, 18 bats, 8 foxes, 3 dogs, 2 cats, and 1 horse.

Tennessee law requires that all dogs and cats be vaccinated against rabies and their shots kept up-to-date. Although cases of rabies in cats in Tennessee are uncommon, there are twice as many rabid cats as dogs in the U.S. To further protect your pets, keep them confined to a controlled area to limit their exposure to wild animals.

from-<http://health.state.tn.us/factsheets/rabies.htm>