

Rabies

Rabies is an acute infection of the central nervous system caused by a neurotropic rhabdovirus of the genus *Lyssavirus*. All mammals, including humans, are susceptible to rabies. In humans, rabies causes a rapidly progressive and fatal encephalomyelitis. The incubation period in humans is usually 2-12 weeks, but there have been documented incubation periods of more than one year. Bites from infected animals constitute the primary route of transmission. Transplanted organs and corneas from patients with fatal undiagnosed rabies have also caused infection in recipients.

Though terrestrial rabies of raccoons is prevalent in the Eastern US, in Oregon, the main source is bats, and animals that come in contact with rabid bats (foxes and cats). An average of 9 % of the bats that are tested in Oregon are positive for rabies. This is not a random sample of all bats but ones who have come in contact with humans or other mammals. Human exposures to bats should be carefully evaluated in a timely manner.

When there is human exposure, testing for rabies should be done at the Oregon State Public Health Laboratories. For animal-to-animal exposures testing is done at Oregon State University.

Persons not previously immunized for rabies who are exposed to a rabid animal should obtain Human Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG) infiltrated at the site of the bite and 5 doses of rabies vaccine, one each, on days 0, 3,7,14, 28.

Though bats are the reservoir in Oregon, canine rabies still accounts for the majority of human rabies cases worldwide. Travelers to rabies endemic countries should be warned to seek immediate medical care if they are bitten by any mammal.


For additional information and an algorithm to follow for assessment of rabies risk, see Appendix 1.

Rabies Tests in Oregon, 1990-2005
(Number of positive/total tested)

Year	Bat	Cat	Dog	Fox	Other Animals
1990	1/29	0/61	0/34	0/1	0/14
1991	4/40	1/85	1/54	1/4	0/19
1992	2/29	0/98	0/54	0/4	0/54
1993	2/43	1/96	0/34	4/10	0/59
1994	10/47	0/88	0/58	3/7	0/78
1995	3/47	0/98	0/61	5/5	0/159
1996	3/48	0/51	0/33	0/5	0/58
1997	14/116	1/83	0/52	0/6	0/45
1998	6/95	0/95	0/56	0/3	0/49
1999	11/115	1/95	0/45	0/1	1/47 (Cow)
2000	8/73	0/79	0/56	1/4	0/4
2001	4/59	0/67	0/46	0/1	0/41
2002	12/134	0/102	0/27	2/4	0/29
2003	6/61	0/75	0/36	1/5	0/39
2004	7/88	0/105	0/42	0/2	0/27
2005	8/83	0/100	0/48	0/1	0/23
Totals 1990-2005	101/1107 (9.1%)	4/1378 (0.3%)	1/736 (0.13%)	17/63 (27%)	1/745 (0.13%)

September 2006

Rabies-positive Animals Oregon, 2005

 = 1 bat

