Rabies Essay, Research Paper

Rabies

What is Rabies? Who gets Rabies? Rabies is a viral disease of humans

and other mammals. It is most common in carnivores. The word rabies comes from

the word “hydrophobia”, fear of water. Rabies is a potentially deadly disease.

There are many things you can do to prevent yourself from meeting

rabies. The most important thing to do, is to be certain your pets have updated

vaccinations. Your pets can first get their vaccinations when they are three

months old. After that booster vaccinations must be given every one to three

years according to your state and city laws. It also depends on the type of

vaccination.

Most people associate rabies with dogs, cats, raccoons, skunks, wolves,

etc. The most common animals to have rabies are dogs, cats, and raccoons.

Rabies cases in cats have outnumbered all other domestic animals every year

since 1988. There was fifty-three percents increase in cat rabies between 1991-

1992. Most of the cases with cats have been unvaccinated strays.

Even if your pets do not go outside, they should still be vaccinated.

You cannot tell if you pet will accidentally get out or an infected animal will

get in. Avoid close contact with any wild animal. Never feed, handle, pet, or

take any wild animals in. Rabid animals will usually act in an abnormal way,

have a foamy saliva around the mouth, and show a loss of hair or fur. If the

animal is nocturnal, it may be out during the day. Rabid animals are usually

very outgoing and aggressive.

To keep wildlife away from your home avoid leaving pet food outside, and

keep the lids on trash cans secure, or store them inside a garage or shed. You

can prevent wildlife from your entering you home by sealing holes and screening

chimneys. If a wild animal does get in, do not touch it. Call your local

animal-control officer or humane society and let them remove it.

The rabies virus can be transmitted in three different ways. These are

through saliva, the bite of an infected animal, and by contact through the mucus

membranes, or breaks in the skin.

Symptoms develop in ten to fifty days after exposure to this virus.

Symptoms in humans usually begin with depression, restlessness, fatigue, and a

fever. This is followed by a period of excitability, excessive salivation, and

convulsions, especially in throat spasms. The victim is unable to drink

although he or she is extremely thirsty. Death from paralysis and suffocation

follows within ten days. Once the symptoms of rabies have appeared, there is no

possible treatment for the disease.

The first vaccine against rabies was developed in France during the

1880’s by Louis Pasteur. Rabies cases in humans have since become rare in the

United States and other developed countries. This is because of the vaccination

programs for domestic animals. People in high risk occupations such as

veterinarians, forest-service, and health workers in developing countries are

also often treated against the disease. In 1987 a less expensive, low-dose

vaccine was introduced for a wider use by campers, travelers, etc. This is a

series of shots that is painful, but it works very well. This is the latest

type of vaccine available.

There are four things you can do if you are bitten by an animal that

might have rabies. You should wash any wounds thoroughly with warm soapy water.

Immediately after, call your doctor or go to an emergency room. Collect as much

information about the animal as possible. If it is someone else’s pet, find out

if it’s rabies vaccinations are up to date. Then report the incident to you

local animal control officer or health board. This is all you can do about the

incident. There are very few rabies cases reported each year. The few cases

reported, mostly with the contact off wild animals. The wild animals that are

most frequently related with the spread of rabies are skunks, foxes, coyotes,

raccoons, rabbits, bats, stray cats, squirrels, rats, and other small rodents.

Despite the few cases reported, more people and animals die of rabies

every year. Fortunately, there are vaccines to help prevent the kind of virus

from spreading and taking animal or human lives.