



PRESS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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September 28 is World Rabies Day

By the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association
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World Rabies Day is September 28 this year. This day is set aside to raise awareness about the impact of rabies on both humans and animals. This year's theme is "Rabies: Zero by 30." The World Health Organization would like there to be zero human deaths from canine rabies by the year 2030. Rabies is a deadly disease; once a person or animal becomes sick with rabies, it is almost always fatal. 100% of human rabies deaths can be prevented and the world has all the tools it needs to end rabies deaths. Prevention is the key: there are incredibly effective vaccines available for humans, dogs, cats, ferrets, livestock, and horses.

Worldwide rabies kills more than 55,000 people every year: over half of these deaths are due to dog bites in children under the age of 15. When one thinks of a rabid animal they likely picture a snarling, aggressive dog who is foaming at the mouth. However, this is not always accurate. Since rabies affects the brain, any time one sees an animal acting bizarrely one should be concerned about rabies. See a wild animal that is not afraid of people? Or a horse not responding to noises? Perhaps an overly aggressive dog? These are examples of rabid animals.

It is crucial that we teach children to tell adults about any animals acting strange since kids may think a raccoon walking into their yard is being friendly. It is also important to note that rabid bats may not react abnormal and the majority of the time one does not know they have been bitten by a bat. Therefore, if a bat is found in a house with sleeping people, medical attention should be sought. If you are ever concerned about a rabid animal, contact your local animal control authorities and the Vermont Health Department at 1-800-4-RABIES.

One health is crucial to preventing rabies death. Human and animal health professionals need to work together to eliminate rabies. Promoting awareness about how easy it is to prevent rabies via vaccines and post-exposure care, encouraging anyone who thinks an animal is acting strange to report it, and being aware that any encounter with bats is a potential danger, will help prevent rabies related deaths. Rabies is a deadly disease, but we can all help to eliminate it. If we keep our pets current on rabies vaccinations, we help protect our community. Further, if we treat all strange acting wildlife with care, we can also protect ourselves.

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The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 360 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine.