CANINE & FELINE VACCINATION INFORMATION

Rabies

Rabies is a severe, often fatal, viral polioencephalitis that specifically affects the gray matter of the brain and its central nervous system (CNS). This virus is transmittable to mammals and can therefore be transmitted to humans. Rabies is primarily transmitted through a bite from a disease carrier: such as fox, raccoon, skunk, or bat. Infectious virus particles are retained in a rabid animal's salivary glands and the virus is transmitted through the exchange of saliva from an infected animal.

Once the virus enters the body it spreads to the closest nerve fibers, and travels from there to the CNS. The virus can take up to six months to develop, but once the symptoms have begun to show it progresses rapidly and death generally occurs in seven to ten days.

There are two forms of rabies: paralytic and furious. In the early stage, the dog or cat will show only mild signs of CNS abnormalities. This will last from one to three days. This will then progress to either the furious stage, the paralytic stage, or a combination of the two, while others succumb to the infection without displaying any major symptoms.

Furious rabies is characterized by extreme behavioral changes, including overt aggression and attack behavior. Paralytic rabies, also referred to as dumb rabies, is characterized by weakness and loss of coordination, followed by paralysis.

Rabies is a fast-moving virus. If your pet has been in a fight with another animal, or has been bitten or scratched by another animal, or if you have any reason to suspect that it has come into contact with a rabid animal, *even if your pet has been vaccinated*, you must take it to a veterinarian for preventive care immediately.

Rabies is always fatal for unvaccinated animals that don't receive proper care immediately after exposure.

Unfortunately there is no 'blood test' for rabies, as the virus lives in the brain tissue and central nervous system, and diagnosis can only be confirmed by post-mortem testing on brain tissue.