Rabies is almost always fatal. Usually, people or animals contract rabies through the bite of an infected animal. In the U.S., rabies is found in wild animals, including bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes. People, pets, horses, and livestock can get rabies from infected wildlife.

Bat exposure is the most common cause of human rabies cases in the U.S. Any direct contact between a person and a bat should be reported to the local health department or other public health authorities. You should also contact your local health authorities if you find a bat in the same room with a person who might not be aware of a possible exposure—such as a sleeping person or unattended child.

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY AND PETS AGAINST RABIES:
- Vaccinate pets (including indoor cats) and livestock against rabies.
- Don’t approach, touch, handle, or feed wild or feral animals. Teach children to leave wild animals alone.
- Don’t keep wild animals as pets.
- If you find a wild animal that appears injured or sick, don’t touch it. Contact local authorities for assistance.
- Seal areas in and around your home where wild animals could enter, such as attics, crawl spaces, chimneys, and spaces under your porch or deck.

KNOW WHAT TO DO IF A PERSON OR PET IS BITTEN OR EXPOSED TO RABIES:
- Gently rinse the wound with soap and water right away.
- Confine the potentially rabid animal if this can be done safely and without directly handling the animal. Otherwise, wait for animal control authorities to capture the animal. Quarantine or rabies testing might be required.
- Consult a physician or veterinarian, as appropriate, to seek wound treatment.
- Report the incident to the local health department or other public health authorities. They will perform a rabies risk assessment and determine if further action is warranted.

For more information about rabies prevention visit avma.org/Rabies or cdc.gov/Rabies