

**The University of Tennessee  
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee  
Occupational Health Program**

**RABIES VIRUS**

**People at Risk:**

Any person that has contact with any mammal. However, main reservoirs associated with infections are: wild and domestic canines, cats, skunks, raccoons, bats, or any other biting animal. This is typically not a problem in the vaccinated laboratory animal (dogs and cats). Any investigator that is working with wild animals or handling specimens from wild animals is at a higher risk of infection.

**Transmission:**

Transfer of virus-laden saliva via a bite wound, a cut in the skin or contact with a mucous membrane. People working with bats in caves may be at risk of air borne transmission.

**Clinical Signs:**

Rabies is fatal in people. It may begin as apprehension, malaise, headache, or fever. Progresses to paralysis, inability to swallow, fear of water, delirium, convulsions, coma, and death.

**Prevention:**

Report all animal bites and scratches. Thoroughly clean any bite or scratch. Identification of the animal that caused the bite or scratch should be attempted to allow for observation or possible testing for rabies. The best prevention is control of rabies in domestic animals through vaccination programs. Any person who is in a high risk group can have a pre-exposure vaccination for rabies.