

Welcome to Main Street Animal Hospital's seasonal newsletter, your quarterly source for pet health news, updates from around the hospital, savings opportunities, and staff profiles.



Featured Article: Rabies Virus and Vaccination

Rabies is a fatal disease caused by a virus transmitted in saliva. A neurologic disease, rabies can lead to one of two forms. One causes seizures and paralysis and is appropriately called the paralytic form. The other, known as the furious form, leads to aggression and excessive drooling, thereby increasing the likelihood of a virus-spreading bite. In either case, death is swift and occurs within ten days of the development of apparent symptoms. There is no test for rabies that can be done on a living animal.

It is important to remember, however, that mammals are the only types of animals that are susceptible to the virus. The most common wild animals to carry the virus in Pennsylvania are bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes.

Pennsylvania requires that both cats and dogs be vaccinated, though many states only require dogs. Cat owners, especially if their cats are indoor-only, perceive the threat of rabies to be minimal, but there is always a risk the cat escapes out of the house or a bat "escapes" into the house. These combined factors have resulted in cats contracting rabies at nearly three times the rate of dogs in the United States.

Pets should be first vaccinated between 3 and 4 months of age and then again a year later. From that point, boosters are typically given every 1 to 3 years, though generally more frequently for cats than for dogs due to a difference in vaccine composition. If your pet may have had contact with a wild animal, contact your veterinarian immediately. Based on the type of wild animal encountered and the recency of your pet's vaccination, your veterinarian may suggest immediate re-vaccination and close observation for a specified time period. Unfortunately, the prognosis is much worse for bitten pets that have not been vaccinated and state-mandated protocol is lengthy. There is also no treatment for rabies once clinical signs have appeared.

If you have questions about your pet and his/her vaccination schedule, reach out to your vet.



Winterizing Your Pet



As the weather turns colder, it's always good to remember a few "rules of thumb" for keeping our pets safe:

- Watch out for ice melt. Salt can irritate dogs' foot pads, but there are pet-safe varieties available.
- Clean up antifreeze spills. Engine coolant contains ethylene glycol, which can be deadly to pets but also attracts them because it is extremely sweet.
- Finally, watch out for common holiday foods that can cause our pets harm. Thanksgiving leftover bones and December chocolates, as well as tinsel and other decor are among many risks to our pets' health.