

# Preventing Rabies: Messaging Toolkit for Local Health and Town Health Officers

## May 2026

This toolkit provides ready-to-use messages and resources to support community partners in sharing clear, accurate information about rabies prevention with your audiences.

**What to do:** Copy and paste social media or newsletter content below. Be sure to link to [HealthVermont.gov/Rabies](https://HealthVermont.gov/Rabies), and share messages throughout the year, but especially during summer months when animal and rabies activity is highest.

**Why it matters:** Your organization is a trusted source of information. Sharing simple prevention steps can help reduce rabies exposure.

Learn more at [HealthVermont.gov/Rabies](https://HealthVermont.gov/Rabies). If you need help additional support, contact [ahs.vdhlsidcommunications@vermont.gov](mailto:ahs.vdhlsidcommunications@vermont.gov).

### Top Messages



- Rabies is a deadly virus that affects the brain and nervous system.
- It spreads through bites or saliva from infected animals.
- In Vermont, the virus is most often found in raccoons, bats, skunks and foxes.
- Avoiding wildlife and vaccinating pets and livestock can prevent rabies.
- Rabies is preventable in humans if treated quickly after exposure.
- Rabid animals are found throughout the state, but cases in raccoons and skunks from northern Vermont have increased in recent years.

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## Sample Front Porch Forum Post, Newsletter, or Email

**Protect your family and pets from rabies.**

Rabies activity among wildlife has significantly increased in Vermont in recent years, especially in Chittenden and Orleans Counties. Rabies is a deadly virus that affects the brain and nervous system. It spreads through bites or saliva from infected animals. In Vermont, the virus is most often found in raccoons, skunks, foxes, and bats. Rabies is preventable in humans if treated quickly after exposure.

Help prevent rabies in people and pets:

- Call the Vermont Rabies Hotline (1-800-4-RABIES) if you see a sick or strangely behaving animal, or wake up to a bat in your sleeping area.
- Do not touch or handle wild or stray animals, including young mammals.
- If you are bitten by an animal, wash the wound well with soap and water and contact your healthcare provider.
- Make sure pets and livestock are up to date on rabies vaccination.
- Keep pets indoors at night and supervise them when outside.

Learn more at [www.HealthVermont.gov/Rabies](http://www.HealthVermont.gov/Rabies).

## Rabies Vaccine Bait Drop

### Background

The Rabies Bait Drop Project is a cooperative effort led by federal wildlife officials to keep raccoon rabies from spreading in Vermont by distributing baited rabies vaccines to wildlife in targeted areas.

The annual rabies vaccine bait drop generally takes place in August. Additional bait drops in May have occurred in recent years to combat rising rabies rates in wildlife.

Learn when bait drops are occurring, and which areas of Vermont baits will be distributed, at [HealthVermont.gov/Rabies#baitdrop](http://HealthVermont.gov/Rabies#baitdrop). If the bait drop is occurring in your area, use the language below during bait drops to raise awareness.

### Sample Newsletter, Email or Blog Post

#### Wildlife Vaccination Effort

Rabies activity has significantly increased in Vermont in recent years. Rabies is a viral disease that is deadly if people don't receive medical care before symptoms start. It is primarily spread through the bite of an infected animal. In Vermont, the disease is most often seen in raccoons, bats, skunks, foxes and woodchucks. Pets and livestock can also get rabies if they have not been vaccinated.

To help reduce the spread of rabies in wildlife, Vermont conducts rabies vaccine bait drops in parts of the state each year. Small bait packets containing oral rabies vaccine are distributed in areas where rabies activity is a concern. The baits are designed to attract raccoons and skunks and may be distributed by airplane, helicopter or by hand, depending on the area. During the rabies vaccine bait drop, leave vaccine baits where they are and call the Rabies Hotline (1-800-4-RABIES) if a pet or child eats or brings one home.



You can keep yourself and pets safe from rabies by:

- Calling the Vermont Rabies Hotline (1-800-4-RABIES) if you see a sick or strangely behaving animal, or wake up to a bat in your sleeping area.
- Do not touch or handle wild or stray animals, including young mammals.
- If you are bitten by an animal, wash the wound well with soap and water and contact your healthcare provider.
- Make sure pets and livestock are up to date on rabies vaccination.
- Keep pets indoors at night and supervise them when outside.

Learn more about rabies and the bait drop effort at [www.HealthVermont.gov/Rabies](http://www.HealthVermont.gov/Rabies)

## Social Media Content

### General Post:

Be aware that wild animals throughout Vermont can carry rabies. Dogs, cats, and people can get rabies when they are bitten by infected wild animals like raccoons, bats, foxes and skunks. Never touch or try to feed wild animals.

Learn more about rabies in Vermont at [www.HealthVermont.gov/Rabies](http://www.HealthVermont.gov/Rabies)



[Download Image](#)

### Pet Safety Post:

Dogs and cats are naturally curious and may approach wild animals. If your pet finds or catches a wild animal, do not touch or try to capture the animal yourself. Call the Rabies Hotline for guidance (1-800-4-RABIES). See your veterinarian regularly to be sure your pets are up to date on their rabies vaccines and other routine care.

Learn more at  
[www.HealthVermont.gov/Rabies](http://www.HealthVermont.gov/Rabies)

**Wild animals in Vermont can carry rabies.**

**Protect your pets with regular rabies shots and preventing contact with wildlife.**



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## Posters

[General Rabies Alert Poster](#)

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## RABIES ALERT!



- ▼ Don't feed or touch wild animals, or animals you don't know—even baby animals.
- ▼ Get rabies shots for all your pets, even cats.
- ▼ Call your doctor right away if you are bitten, or get animal saliva in a cut, eyes, nose or mouth.

**Vermont Rabies Hotline:**  
**1-800-4-RABIES (1-800-472-2437)**

If you have contact with an animal that may have rabies, call the Vermont Department of Health at 800-640-4374 or 863-7240 (8 to 4:30 Mon-Fri).



### [Bat Rabies Alert Poster](#)

[\[click to download\]](#)

## Never Touch a Bat



- ▶ You can't tell if a bat has rabies just by looking at it.
- ▶ If you see a bat, don't touch it.
- ▶ Call your doctor right away if you are bitten or get animal saliva in a cut, eyes, nose or mouth.

**Need help? Call the Vermont Rabies Hotline:  
1-800-4-RABIES (1-800-472-2437)**



## Instructional Videos: Bats in Your Home



In partnership with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, we have developed instructional videos on what to do if you find a bat in your living space. These videos are on our YouTube page and can be shared. They include:

- [How to Capture and Contain a Bat Inside Your Living Space](#)
- [When to Consider a Possible Rabies Exposure after a Bat Encounter](#)
- [How to Release a Captured Bat](#)
- [How to Keep Bats Out of Your Living Space](#)

