



88 Beech Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452
(802) 878-6888 voice
www.vtvets.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Linda Waite-Simpson, Associate Director
802-878-6888 info@vtvets.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 21, 2020

September 28th 2020 is the 14th World Rabies Day

By Dr. Erin Forbes, DVM, VVMA Communications Chair

September 28th is this year's World Rabies Day and the theme is End Rabies: Collaborate, Vaccinate. The mission of World Rabies Day is to "raise awareness about the impact of human and animal rabies, how easy it is to prevent it, and how to eliminate the main sources". The overall goal of World Rabies Day is Zero by 30: there should be zero deaths from rabies by 2030. This year, the theme focuses on the importance of dog vaccination and post-exposure prophylaxis and the need for a united effort for eliminating this virus that knows no bounds.

Rabies is a fatal and zoonotic viral disease that occurs across the world and kills both humans and animals. This disease is spread by the bite of a rabid animal and immediate treatment is needed to prevent a horrible death. After a bite occurs the virus will travel through the nervous system until it reaches the brain. Symptoms generally start out as non-specific, such as fatigues, headaches, and discomfort. As the infection progresses symptoms include anxiety, confusion, partial paralysis, hallucinations, hypersalivation, difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia. Eventually the patient falls into a coma and as there is no cure for rabies, death occurs. Rabies kills over 50,000 people each year. The majority of these deaths are a result of people being bitten by an infected dog. Up to 60% of rabies deaths occur in children under 15 years of age, which means that one child dies every 15 minutes from rabies.

The best way to prevent rabies is keeping your pets vaccinated against it. In fact, it is law in Vermont that dogs, cats, ferrets, and wolf hybrids be vaccinated against rabies. This must be performed by a licensed veterinarian and be done in accordance with vaccine manufacturer guidelines. It is also

recommended that horses and livestock animals be vaccinated against rabies, though not required. Vermont has a high prevalence of rabies in bats, skunks, foxes, and raccoons so there is a high risk of exposure in all of our companion animals.

By working together, we can all help keep both people and animals free from rabies. The rabies vaccine is incredibly effective and by keeping your pets rabies vaccine up to date, you can help prevent rabies from spreading. According to Professor Louis Nel, Executive Director of the Global Alliance for Rabies Control, "We can save the lives of tens of thousands of people that die needlessly each year from rabies by raising awareness of the disease and taking the correct preventative measures. Rabies is a global problem with a solution."

###