

ZOO AND EXOTIC ANIMAL BITES

Frequently asked questions



Is there a risk of rabies from a zoo/exotic animal bite?

Rabies is a virus that infects mammals. Any mammal is susceptible to rabies, and infected mammals can shed the virus in their saliva. If the zoo/exotic animal you were exposed to is a mammal, you may be at risk. Your risk will be evaluated based on several factors, including:

- The animal species
 - If the biting or scratching animal is a non-human primate, assess the potential risk for other zoonotic diseases (e.g., Herpes B virus in macaques), as appropriate.
- The type of exposure, where the exposure occurred, and the circumstances surrounding the exposure
 - Consider whether the exposure occurred locally or during international travel, as rabies risk varies by location and animal species.
- The animal's health at the time of the exposure
- How the animal is housed and whether it may have been exposed to rabid wildlife

There are no established quarantine guidelines for zoo or exotic animals. Rabies testing is the only way to know for certain if an animal has rabies. If you have been bitten or scratched by a zoo or exotic animal, contact your local health department to help assess your rabies risk.

If the animal is vaccinated against rabies, does this mean I am not at risk?

There is no USDA-licensed rabies vaccine for zoo/exotic animals. Some zoological parks and research institutions may establish rabies vaccination programs for these animals; however, vaccination does not replace the need for a rabies risk assessment following a human exposure.

What are the Utah requirements for zoological parks and research institutions?

When a zoo/exotic animal maintained in a USDA-approved zoological park or research institution bites or scratches a person, the facility must notify the Utah Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). A zoological park or research institution may establish a rabies vaccination program for these animals; however, vaccination does not replace appropriate public health actions following a human exposure. Under Utah Administrative Rule R386-702, DHHS may waive certain requirements if the facility demonstrates appropriate rabies control measures, including:

- Employees working with the exposing animal have received rabies pre-exposure vaccination.
- The exposed person voluntarily agrees to receive rabies post-exposure prophylaxis.



**Department of Health
& Human Services**

 <https://epi.utah.gov/rabies/>

 801-538-6191

