

# Panhandle

## Public Health District

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For Immediate Release:

### **Warm Weather Brings Rise in Animal Bites—Panhandle Public Health District Issues Safety Reminder**

Panhandle Public Health District is urging panhandle residents to take precautions following a recent rise in animal bite incidents. Warmer weather has brought more people and pets outdoors, which can contribute increased interactions with both stray and domestic animals.

“Animal bites can pose serious health risks, including infection and the potential for rabies,” says Jessica Davies, Director at PPHD. “We want to remind Panhandle residents to stay safe and take steps to protect themselves, their families, and their pets.”

#### **Tips for Staying Safe Around Animals**

Ways to protect yourself from an animal bite include:

- Avoiding contact with wildlife and unfamiliar animals
- Asking permission before touching someone else’s pet
- Reporting concerning or aggressive animals to local animal control
- Keeping your pets’ rabies vaccination up to date
- Not leaving pet food or water bowls outside unattended
- Educating children not to approach animals without adult’s permission

#### **Rabies**

Rabies is a fatal but preventable viral disease. It can be spread to people and pets through the bite and scratch of an infected animal. Rabies affects the central nervous system, leading to severe brain disease, and is almost always fatal once symptoms appear. However, rabies is preventable with timely medical care.

In Nebraska, animals that are known to carry rabies include bats, skunks, raccoons, and foxes. Never touch or handle wild animals even if they look sick, injured, or tame. Do not attempt to feed or care for wild animals. Contact animal control if there is a concern. If a bat is found inside your home, especially while you are sleeping, you should contact animal control and report this to Panhandle Public Health immediately.

#### **What To Do If You Are Bitten**



If you are bitten by an animal, it is important to wash the wound with soap and water. You should also:

- Seek medical care for bites or scratches
- Try to remember key details about the animal including size, color, behavior, whether it is a stray or an owned animal, etc.
- Report the bite to local animal control
- If the animal can be safely confined, do not release or destroy as this can help with rabies testing and determining medical treatment

If you have any questions about rabies, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/about/index.html>, call PPHD at 308-633-2866, or contact your local veterinarian's office. To learn more about rabies in Nebraska visit <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/rabies.aspx>.

To sign up for PPHD's news releases, [click here](#) or visit [www.pphd.ne.gov](http://www.pphd.ne.gov). Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community. Visit our website [www.pphd.ne.gov](http://www.pphd.ne.gov).