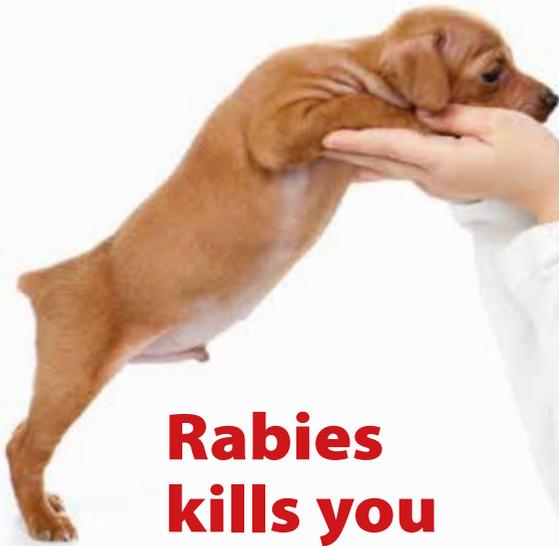


**Aren't they lovely?**  
**They can be**  
**deadly...**



**Rabies**  
**kills you**  
**and your dear**

**A pet is**  
**NOT a holiday souvenir**



Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain

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# What is rabies?

Rabies is a zoonosis (a disease transmitted by animals to humans) caused by a virus. Rabies is considered to be one of the most dangerous and most feared zoonoses. The disease infects domestic and wild animals and is transmitted to humans through contact with saliva when they are licked, scratched or bitten by a rabid animal or through contact with a wound of an infected animal.

Rabies causes progressive encephalitis.

As soon as the symptoms of rabies become visible the disease is always fatal for humans and animals, usually within a very short period of time (two weeks at most).



## Symptoms, diagnosis and treatment?

The symptoms of rabies may vary strongly and only few animals display the classic disease symptoms of aggression and anxiety. Symptoms that may also be observed are fever, general malaise, abnormal behaviour (wild animals suddenly becoming very tame), hypersalivation, refusing food, excitation, muscle trembling, cramps, exaggerated reactions to bright light and loud sounds, abnormal tail position, signs of paralysis, coma and death.

Sometimes, it takes months before an infected animal displays the first symptoms. However, two weeks before the first symptoms appear, the infected animal can already infect other animals and humans because its saliva already contains the virus.

The only chance to stop a rabies contamination is to start treatment within 24 hours after contact with a contaminated animal.

As soon as symptoms are visible, rabies in humans and animals is always fatal.

Because the symptoms are not always obvious and there are no tests to detect rabies in live animals, many cases of rabies go undiagnosed or are diagnosed too late. A conclusive diagnosis can only be obtained after an autopsy of the dead animal.

A photograph of a small, fluffy puppy with black, white, and brown patches, being gently held by a human hand. The puppy is looking towards the camera with large, dark eyes. The background is plain white.

*It can take months  
before  
an infected animal  
shows the first  
symptoms*

*There's no test  
available for  
diagnosing rabies  
in live animals*

## A few facts

- > Rabies occurs in more than 150 countries and areas.
- > Each year, more than 55,000 people die from rabies worldwide, especially in Asia and Africa.
- > 40 % of the victims bitten by rabid animals are children younger than 15. This can be explained by the fact that children occasionally get scratched or bitten while playing with animals and don't always tell their parents.
- > Dogs are the cause of 99% of all fatal cases of human rabies.
- > Annually, more than 15 million people worldwide receive treatment to prevent the disease after contact with an infected animal. This way several hundred thousand fatalities can be avoided.

*Worldwide  
every 10 minutes  
someone dies  
of rabies*



## Which animals can transmit rabies?

Dogs are the most important hosts and spreaders of rabies. In addition to dogs, bats are also an important source of many human fatalities. Foxes, cats, raccoons, skunks, squirrels, jackals, mongooses and other wild carnivores can also transmit the disease.



*Rabies is present in more than 150 countries, including lots of popular holiday destinations*

## What about Belgium?

In 2001, Belgium was officially declared free of rabies. However, in 2007 and 2008 two cases of rabies were detected. In both cases infected animals without symptoms of rabies, were brought into Belgium from a holiday destination.

Most cases of rabies in Belgium and in our neighbouring countries concern "illegally" imported animals from countries where rabies is highly prevalent and vaccination is not mandatory. These animals will consequently be euthanized and if the diagnosis of rabies is confirmed, all persons and animals that had contact with the Rabid animal will be treated.

In Belgium, a mandatory vaccination applies to dogs, cats and ferrets when they travel to other Member States or to countries outside of the EU.

Every suspicion of rabies must be notified to the FASFC.

## Bringing animals into Belgium

If you bring pets (dogs, cats and ferrets) into Belgium or return from a holiday with your pet (even for a very short holiday) you are subject to very strict sanitary rules.

### Importing animals from a EU Member State

The animal must have a European passport, has to be identified by means of a chip and has to be vaccinated against rabies.

Bear in mind that the first vaccination against rabies, the so-called primary vaccination, is valid at the earliest 21 days after the vaccination was administered! In some cases a sanitary certificate may be required.

## Importing animals from a non-EU state

In addition to the mandatory identification (chip) and vaccination, in most cases the animal will have to be subjected to a blood test at the earliest 30 days after the vaccination and at least 3 months prior to the journey. This means that bringing animals from some countries outside of the EU into Belgium will take at least 4 months!

**More detailed information on rabies in general and on the regulations regarding "travelling with pets" can be found on the following web pages :**

- the website of the FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment:  
<http://www.health.belgium.be/eportal/AnimalsandPlants/travellingwithyourpets/index.htm>  
FASFC webpage on rabies: <http://www.favv.be/santeanimale/rage/>

*Very strict  
sanitary rules  
apply when bringing  
animals  
into Belgium*



## Talk to your vet

Ask your vet for additional information if you plan on travelling with your pet or if you want to bring an animal into Belgium.

He will inform you about the applicable rules.



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