Rabies in Arkansas

Rabies in Arkansas lives in the wild in skunks and bats. Arkansas does not have the raccoon variant of rabies. Most raccoons that act abnormally, circling and/or showing signs of brain disease, have distemper.

What about the animal that bites a person?

- It is important to confirm whether or not the animal could have been rabid at the time of the bite. Detain or hold the animal if it can be done safely. Without the animal, the person bitten may need to receive costly (about $2000 for the series) and uncomfortable rabies preventive shots. Report any animal bite to a County Health Unit for investigation.
- Confine and observe for 10 days any healthy dog or cat that bites a person, whether current on rabies vaccinations or not. Immediately report any illness during this quarantine period to a County Health Unit and to a veterinarian for evaluation. If signs of rabies develop, kill the animal humanely so its head can be tested for rabies.
- You may kill immediately any stray or unwanted dog or cat that bites a person. There is no 100 percent safe quarantine time for wild animals.
- In all cases, do not damage the head of the animal to be tested.

What about an animal that bites a dog/cat/horse?

- A healthy dog or cat that bites your pet generally is of no concern, especially if you have followed the state law that requires your dog or cat to be vaccinated against rabies.
- Immediately kill a wild or exotic animal, especially a skunk or bat, that bites your pet and submit for rabies testing.

Steps to follow to submit for testing

- Contact a veterinarian or animal control officer that has been trained in the head removal process.
- If rabies is suspected always use protective gear to prevent exposure during the removal process. Everyone that comes in contact with the animal should wear gloves, long sleeves and pants, goggles and a covering for the nose and mouth.
- Double bag the head/whole bat in plastic bags or Ziplocs and keep refrigerated (not frozen). If the head cannot be removed immediately, the entire animal should be kept chilled to preserve the brain for testing.
- Submit the head to any County Health Unit for rabies testing of brain tissue by the Arkansas Public Health Laboratory. The ADH laboratory only accepts the head of an animal for testing, unless the animal is smaller than the palm of the hand. Please do not remove the head of a bat!
- There is at least one ADH Health Unit in all 75 counties of Arkansas.

http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programsServices/localPublicHealthOffices/Pages/default.aspx

For questions call your County Health Unit or the Arkansas Department of Health at 1 800-633-1735