

Guidance Document for Animal Bite Reports

An Animal Bite Investigation Form must be completed and returned to the health department within 24 hours, according to Ohio Administrative Code 3701-3-28.

(If the incident was reported to the police, health department or other medical office, a form may have already been completed.)

Q: *Why do I need to fill out a bite report?*

A: The report notifies the health department so that the biting animal's owner can be instructed on quarantine requirements. The biting animal must be quarantined for a period of 14 days, during which the animal's health must be monitored with any odd behavior or illness reported to the health department.

Q: *What does Quarantine mean?*

A: This means that the animal will not be allowed to roam freely, come into contact with other animals or other people, or come up missing, which would prevent the observation of the animal's health and activities. Unusual behavior or death of the animal must be reported to the health department immediately.

Q: *What if the owner is reluctant to provide information, in fear of the animal being taken away?*

A: The health department's only concern is determining if the animal was infected with rabies at the time of the bite so the person that was bitten can be treated if needed.

Q: *Should I destroy the animal myself and save everyone a lot of trouble?*

A: No. This may keep us from obtaining valuable information that can only come from the animal. Check with the health department before any decisions concerning the animal are made.

Q: *Does the health department decide who is at fault?*

A: Usually, the health department does not get involved with who is at fault for the bite or why it occurred.

Q: *How long does it take to find out a rabies test result?*

A: The animal can be sent in for testing with results returned within 1-2 days in most circumstances. Contact the health department for procedures on submitting specimens.

Q: *Where do you go for treatment after an animal bite?*

A: Always seek treatment from your personal physician. The health department typically recommends that when bites involve wild, feral domestic, or ill animals, the person should receive rabies prophylaxis treatment, especially if the animal cannot be located for testing.

Q: *Is rabies serious?*

A: Rabies can cause death if left untreated.

*Rabies is not common in Mercer County, but it does exist. Bats have tested positive for the rabies virus in recent years.