



Gina E. Meekins, DVM

Retriever and "Kuechly," their kitten adopted from Cobb Animal Clinic!

Dr. Gina E. Meekins was born in Columbia, South Carolina and was raised in Greensboro, North Carolina. She earned a BS in Animal Science from North Carolina State University and her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from North Carolina State University in 1995. While attending veterinary school she worked in the avian disease research lab and spent a summer doing an internship with the Animal Health Division of the American Cyanamid Company. Her senior year she received the Pfizer Scholarship Award for Research Excellence.

Upon graduating from Veterinary School, Dr. Meekins worked for three years in a small animal practice in Kernersville, NC and then spent three years working at an emergency clinic before coming to Cobb Animal Clinic. Currently she shares her home with her husband Hayes, their two sons Hayes and Ryan, and Riley their daughter. They also enjoy spending time with "Beason" their Golden Retriever and "Kuechly," their kitten adopted from Cobb Animal Clinic!



Rabies—What You Need To Know!

Rabies is a deadly viral disease which attacks the central nervous system of warm-blooded animals and causes acute inflammation of the brain. Early intervention after exposure can effectively prevent the disease, but once symptoms appear, the disease is almost always fatal.

The rabies virus is transmitted in the saliva of an infected animal, typically into a bite wound. On rare occasions, rabies has been transmitted by other routes such as contamination of mucous membranes or aerosol transmission. The incubation period is typically between 1-3 months, but can range from less than a week to greater than one year.

The World Health Organization reports that rabies is present in over 100 countries and the virus is responsible for an estimated **50,000 human deaths** annually. The majority of these cases occur in Africa and Asia, and exposure is typically due to rabid dogs. Due to strenuous vaccination protocols of our pets, and successful post exposure treatments, the United States only sees around one to three deaths per year, although, an estimated **39,000 people** receive post exposure treatments annually.

In North Carolina, rabies is found most commonly in raccoons, skunks, red and grey foxes, coyotes, wolves, ground hogs and beavers. Bats are also a significant source of rabies, and although only a small percentage actually carry the virus, they represent the most common route of exposure to people in the United States.

The rules and regulations for dealing with rabies are strict, and that is because there is NO way to test for rabies in a live animal! Since this disease is fatal, laws are in place to protect people's safety.

- North Carolina Law requires that any owner of a dog, cat, or ferret shall have their animal vaccinated by four months of age, and keep the animal currently vaccinated against rabies. There are no legal exemptions to rabies vaccination of pets in the N.C. General Statutes. Rabies antibody testing (titers) are not to be used in place of current vaccination.

- If your pet is potentially exposed to rabies and is current on rabies vaccination, the animal should be immediately revaccinated for rabies within five days of exposure. It is advised that the animal remain under the owner's control and be carefully observed for potential clinical signs for 45 days.

- If a pet's vaccination coverage has lapsed, or the animal has never been vaccinated, and has been exposed to potential rabies, the local health director has the authority to require the owner to euthanize the animal, or place the animal (at the owner's expense) in quarantine up to six months at a designated facility.

- If you are bitten or scratched by any animal, clean the wound immediately with soap and water for 15 minutes and call your doctor. Do not attempt capture of an animal yourself. Call Animal Control immediately. If the animal is a dog,

cat, or ferret, it can be placed in a 10 day confinement in a designated facility to monitor for development of clinical signs of rabies. If signs of rabies develop, the animal will be humanely euthanized and submitted for testing.

- For people with confirmed exposure to rabies, there is a rabies post exposure vaccination protocol. It consists of a dose of human immune globulin and four doses of rabies vaccine. This set of vaccinations is highly effective at preventing rabies if given as soon as possible following an exposure.

Common sense is the key to safety and prevention. Keep all family pets up to date on their rabies vaccinations. Limit your exposure to stray animals and wildlife, and counsel children on the dangers of handling these animals. Wear protective gloves when handling dead or sick wildlife. Avoid any contact with bats. If you have any questions on handling a situation, don't hesitate to contact your physician, veterinarian, Animal Control, or your local health department for help.

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