

Risks of Animal CPR

When an animal is in distress or unresponsive, many people may feel an instinct to help such as by performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). In Manitoba, CPR courses for cats or dogs are offered for this reason and are becoming more popular. However, public health does not recommend mouth-to-nose (or mouth-to-mouth) resuscitation for animal CPR since it can put the person performing it at risk of being bitten or contracting diseases like rabies from the animal. It is important for everyone to be aware of these health risks.

Animals may carry many different diseases such as rabies, avian flu, ringworm, Lyme disease, fleas, scabies and more that can be transmitted to humans in different ways. Diseases range from mild to severe illness and can sometimes be fatal. One way diseases can spread is through contact with saliva or mucus from an infected animal, which can happen with mouth-to-nose resuscitation. It may not always be obvious which animals carry diseases, and even healthy-appearing animals may be infected. For example, a cat or dog infected with rabies can be contagious to others for up to 10 days before it appears sick.

One of the main diseases of concern with animal mouth-to-nose resuscitation is rabies. In the Interlake-Eastern health region, animals test positive for rabies every year. Rabies is a viral infection most often transmitted when animal saliva gets into a fresh cut or wound, or through mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose and mouth. The risk is higher when exposed to wild animals such as skunks, foxes and raccoons, as well as bats. However, there is still a risk of rabies with domesticated animals.

Rabies attacks the nervous system, and once symptoms appear in an animal or human, rabies is almost always fatal. If there is a risk of exposure to rabies, public health can offer rabies post-exposure vaccinations. A complete series of four to five vaccinations accompanied by

rabies immune globulin should be started promptly and is highly effective in preventing rabies. Contact information for your local community health office can be found at www.ierha.ca/find-us

Reassessment Campaign on Veterinary Resuscitation (RECOVER) is an organization run by veterinarians who produce advice on cat or dog CPR. Their guidelines advise that pet CPR can be given by pet owners to owned cats and dogs. But before providing treatment to a cat or dog, it is important to think of the possible risks to your health. Public health recommends against any contact of a person's mouth with the mouth or nose of a sick animal, but especially with wild, stray or unknown animals. If you do decide to perform CPR on your owned cat or dog, perform only chest compressions and ensure you seek immediate veterinary care.

Giving mouth-to-nose resuscitation to an animal puts you at risk of being bitten or contracting diseases including rabies. If you have had contact through your mouth with the mouth or nose of a sick, wild or stray animal, contact your local public health nurse at the community health office in your area or contact Health Links–Info Santé toll-free at 1-888-315-9257 for advice. Act promptly if exposure may have occurred and seek guidance without delay.

If your pet is injured or sick, you can contact your veterinarian for assistance. Avoid contact with wildlife and stray animals. Domestic animal health and welfare concerns can be reported to the Provincial Animal Care line toll-free at 1-888-945-8001. If you find any strange-acting or injured wildlife on your property, you can contact the Wildlife Conservation TIP Line at 1-800-782-0076 where a conservation officer will assist you with the best next steps.

For more information about rabies, visit the Manitoba Health website at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/diseases/rabies.html>