

HYDROPHOBIA RABIES OR MADNESS

Rabies is a contagious disease, which is usually transmitted by a bite and by the introduction of a virus contained in the saliva of an affected animal. It may, however, be transmitted in other ways. It is characterized by symptoms of aberration of the nervous system and invariably terminates fatally: It is accompanied by lesions, inflammation, and degeneration in the central nervous system. It is a disease that is most common in the dog, but is transmitted to the horse, either from dogs or from any other animal affected with it. As a disease of the horse it is invariably the result of the bite of a rabid animal, usually a dog.

Rabies Symptoms. - From the moment of inoculation by the bite of a rabid dog or other rabid animal or by other means, a variable time elapses before the development of any symptoms. This time may be eight days or it may be several months; it is usually about four weeks. The first symptom is an irritation of the original wound. This wound, which may have healed completely, commences to itch until the horse rubs or bites it into a new sore. The horse then becomes irritable and vicious. It is especially susceptible to moving objects; excessive light, noises, the entrance of an attendant, or any other disturbance will cause the patient to be on the defensive.

It apparently sees imaginary objects; the slightest noise is exaggerated into threatening violence; the approach of an attendant or another animal, especially a dog, is interpreted as an assault and the horse will strike and bite. The violence on the part of the rabid horse is not for a moment to be confounded with the fury of the same animal suffering from meningitis or any other trouble of the brain. But in rabies there is volition, a premeditated method, in the attacks which the animal will make, which is not found in the other diseases.

Between the attacks of fury the animal may become calm for a variable period. In the period of fury the horse will bite at the reopened original wound; it will rear and attempt to break its halter and fastenings; it will bite at the woodwork and surrounding objects in the stable. If the animal lives long enough it shows paralytic symptoms and falls to the ground, unable to use two or more of its extremities, but in the majority of cases, in its excesses of violence, it does physical injury to itself.

It breaks its jaws in biting at the manger or fractures other bones in throwing itself on the ground and dies of hemorrhage or internal injuries. At times throughout the course of the disease there is an excessive sensibility of the skin which, if irritated by the touch, will bring on attacks of violence. The animal may have appetite and desire water throughout the course of the disease, but on attempt to swallow has a spasm of the throat, which renders the act impossible.

This latter condition, which is common in all rabid animals, has given the disease the name of hydrophobia (fear of water).

