



# Summary of Healthcare Provider Guidelines for Human Rabies Prevention\*

- Assess the risk of rabies exposure by considering:
1. Animal species, health and behavior (e.g., bite unprovoked vs. provoked by entering animal's territory, helping injured animal, trying to capture, coming between animal and its young, taking animal's food , acting aggressively toward animal, petting unfamiliar animal)
  2. Geographic location or origin of animal (e.g., bite by animal imported from or animal with travel to area with endemic rabies within last 6 months)
  3. Likelihood animal exposed to potentially rabid animal (e.g., pet observed capturing or biting a bat)
- The table below serves as a guide – see the Public Health website for more information\*
- All suspected human rabies exposures must be immediately reported to Public Health - Seattle & King County (Public Health) (WAC 246-101).
  - Low risk bites and exposures are NOT reportable
  - 24 Hour report and consultation is available from Public Health at 206-296-4774; animal testing can be facilitated if indicated.
  - Report animal only exposures (no human involvement) to Public Health, Environmental Health at 206-263-9566 within 1 day.
  - If giving post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), report to Public Health ideally before administering PEP.
  - Rabies exposures include bites, scratches, open wounds, or mucous membranes contaminated with an infected mammal's saliva or neural tissue. Touching animal fur, blood, urine, or feces is not a rabies exposure. Non-mammals, e.g., birds and reptiles, do not get rabies.
  - Bats require special consideration.<sup>a</sup>

ANIMAL TYPE	GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF EXPOSURE	ANIMAL CAPTURE AND TESTING RECOMMENDATION	RABIES POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP) RECOMMENDATION
SUSPECTED HUMAN RABIES EXPOSURES MUST BE IMMEDIATELY REPORTED TO PUBLIC HEALTH AT 206-296-4774. THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE LOW RISK BITES.			
Any bat <sup>a</sup> Any rabid-acting <sup>b</sup> mammal (domestic or wild) including dog, cat, or ferret	Anywhere	Test immediately, if animal available. For all head or neck bites from bats or rabid-acting <sup>b</sup> mammals, testing should be done within 24 hours.	Begin PEP immediately; discontinue if animal tests negative for rabies. For bat exposures, begin PEP immediately for head and neck bites; for other bat exposures, may delay starting PEP for 24-48 hours and begin PEP if bat tests positive or indeterminate.
Wild carnivore, including skunk, fox, coyote, hybrid canine or feline or wild primate	Anywhere	Test immediately, if animal available	Same as above.
Raccoon	Areas where rabies is endemic in wild terrestrial carnivores (i.e., <u>outside</u> Washington state and the Pacific Northwest)	Test immediately, if animal available	Same as above.
Dog, cat, or ferret [Does <u>not</u> apply to hybrids]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Animal in area with endemic rabies (<u>Not</u> United States)</li><li>• Animal imported from or traveled to an area with endemic rabies within last 6 months. Endemic areas include: Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Middle East, India, South/Central America</li><li>• Animal had contact with bat or other potentially rabid animal</li></ul>	Confine and observe for 10 days (or test) when possible. <sup>c, d</sup>	PEP recommended if animal not available for 10-day observation or testing. If animal dies or develops signs of rabies within 10 days, report to Public Health immediately. If alive and healthy after 10 days, PEP not indicated.
LOW RISK BITES ARE NOT REPORTABLE TO PUBLIC HEALTH. IF THE ANIMAL DEVELOPS RABIES SIGNS, CONSULT PUBLIC HEALTH IMMEDIATELY.			
Raccoon	Washington state (no endemic rabies in terrestrial mammals) <sup>e</sup>	No need to test unless rabid-acting <sup>b</sup> or unusual circumstances.	PEP at the discretion of treating health care provider.
Dog, cat, or ferret: normal appearance and behavior [Does <u>not</u> apply to hybrids]	United States	Recommend animal be confined and observed for 10 days. <sup>c, d</sup> Observe healthy-appearing pets at owner's home, or through local animal control agency.	PEP not indicated unless animal develops signs of rabies within 10 days. If animal dies or develops signs of rabies within 10 days, report to Public Health immediately. <b>Note:</b> Animal quarantine not arranged by Public Health.
Small rodent, squirrel, opossum, rabbit, or livestock (e.g., cattle, horse, sheep)	Anywhere	No need to test unless rabid-acting <sup>b</sup> or unusual circumstances. Livestock should be evaluated by a veterinarian.	PEP almost never indicated, rabies in these animals is primarily a potential concern in areas with terrestrial rabies.

<sup>a</sup> Bats: May assume exposure if bat found in a room with a person who cannot be certain that exposure did not occur (e.g., unattended infant or child, intoxicated adult, sleeping person). Bat bites may not leave visible marks.

<sup>b</sup> Rabid-acting: A set of neurologic signs (e.g., extreme unprovoked aggression, excess salivation, unusual vocalizations, behavior change, limb paralysis) best determined by a veterinarian.

<sup>c</sup> Dogs, cats, and ferrets should be confined and observed for 10 days after a bite if possible. If the animal is alive and healthy after the 10 days the animal did not have rabies at the time of the bite.

<sup>d</sup> If animal (dog, cat, or ferret) needs to be euthanized for humane reasons prior to the completion of the 10 day confinement and observation period contact Public Health to discuss testing.

<sup>e</sup> CDC guidance is to consider all wild carnivores potentially rabid, but no recent raccoon rabies has been documented in Washington or surrounding states.



# Summary of Healthcare Provider Guidelines for Human Rabies Prevention\*

## Legal reporting requirements in Washington State (WAC 246-101-101 and -301)

- All healthcare providers, healthcare facilities, and veterinarians are required to *immediately* notify the local health jurisdiction (LHJ) regarding suspected rabies exposures, including:
  - “Animal bites (when human exposure to rabies is suspected),” and
  - “Rabies, suspected human exposure (suspected human rabies exposure due to a bite from or other exposure to an animal that is suspected to be rabid)”
- The algorithm is intended to be a guide in determining whether an exposure to rabies should be suspected.

## Washington State rabies facts

- Bats are currently the only known reservoir for rabies in Washington State.
  - Rabies is not endemic in raccoons, skunks, foxes, or other wild carnivores in this state; however no routine animal surveillance is done in Washington.
  - Rarely, other animals are bitten by bats and may become rabid in Washington State; examples since 1988 include horse, llama, and cat.
  - Historical animal testing for rabies in Washington State: [www.doh.wa.gov/notify/other/rabiested-past.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/notify/other/rabiested-past.pdf)
- Imported animals may increase the risk in Washington State.
  - Risk differs elsewhere in the United States (e.g., raccoon rabies is endemic in the east coast, skunk rabies in central states).
  - Rabies is more common in certain areas of the world (e.g., dog rabies in Asia and Africa).

## Criteria to consider when assessing risk of rabies exposure

- Animal species, health and behavior (e.g., bite unprovoked vs. provoked by entering animal's territory, helping injured animal, trying to capture, coming between animal and its young, taking animal's food, acting aggressively toward animal, petting unfamiliar animal)
- Geographic location or origin of animal (e.g., bite occurred in animal imported from or animal with travel to area with endemic rabies within last 6 months)
- Likelihood animal exposed to another rabid animal (e.g., bite by a pet previously observed to have captured or bitten a bat).

Health care providers can consult Public Health – Seattle and King County 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 206-296-4774.

## References and additional resources

- KING COUNTY
  - Animal bites and rabies resources for patients and health care providers, including updated guidelines: [www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/providers/RabiesAssessment](http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/providers/RabiesAssessment)
- WASHINGTON STATE
  - LHJ contact information: [www.doh.wa.gov/notify/other/lhcontacts.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/notify/other/lhcontacts.pdf)
  - Washington State Department of Health contacts:
    - **Human exposures/illness:** Communicable Disease Epidemiology Section (CDES), 877-539-4344 or 206-418-5500 (24/7 on-call service)
    - **Animal-only exposures:** Environmental Health-Zoonotic Disease Program: 360-236-3385 (Mon. – Fri., 8 am – 4 pm only; if unable to reach, call CDES)
    - **Testing (human and animal):** Communicable Disease Epidemiology Section (CDES), 877-539-4344 or 206-418-5500 (24/7 on-call service)
- UNITED STATES
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention rabies resources: [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies)
  - Human Rabies Prevention ---Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices ([www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/ACIP-list.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/ACIP-list.htm))
- INTERNATIONAL
  - World Health Organization recommendations: [www.who.int/wer/2010/wer8532.pdf](http://www.who.int/wer/2010/wer8532.pdf)
- ANIMAL RABIES
  - Blanton J, et al. Rabies Surveillance in the United States During 2009. *Journal of the American Veterinary Association*. 2010 Sep 15;237(6):646-57.

\*Last revised May 9, 2011. Detailed updated guidelines are available on the Public Health website at: [www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/providers/RabiesAssessment](http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/providers/RabiesAssessment)