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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANIMAL TYPE</th>
<th>GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF EXPOSURE</th>
<th>ANIMAL CAPTURE AND TESTING</th>
<th>RABIES POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP) RECOMMENDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any bat*</td>
<td>Anywhere</td>
<td>Test immediately, if animal available. For all head or neck bites from bats or rabid-acting mammal, testing should be done within 24 hours.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any rabid-acting mammal (domestic or wild) including dog, cat, or ferret</td>
<td>Anywhere</td>
<td>Test immediately, if animal available</td>
<td>Same as above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild carnivore, including skunk, fox, coyote, hybrid canine or feline or wild primate</td>
<td>Anywhere</td>
<td>Test immediately, if animal available</td>
<td>Same as above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racoon</td>
<td>Areas where racine is endemic in wild terrestrial carnivores (i.e., outside Washington State and the Pacific Northwest)</td>
<td>Test immediately, if animal available</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog, cat, or ferret [Does not apply to hybrids]</td>
<td>• Animal in area with endemic racine (Not United States)</td>
<td>Confin and observe for 10 days (or test) when possible.</td>
<td>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. Note: Animal quarantine not arranged by Public Health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog, cat, or ferret: normal appearance and behavior [Does not apply to hybrids]</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Recommend animal be confined and observed for 10 days. Observe healthy-appearing pets at owner’s home, or through local animal control agency.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small rodent, squirrel, opossum, rabbit, or livestock (e.g., cattle, horse, sheep)</td>
<td>Anywhere</td>
<td>No need to test unless rabid-acting or unusual circumstances. Livestock should be evaluated by a veterinarian.</td>
<td>PEP almost never indicated, rabies in these animals is primarily a potential concern in areas with terrestrial rabies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

*Last revised May 9, 2011. Detailed updated guidelines are available on the Public Health website at: www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/providers/RabiesAssessment
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.
- 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/lhjcontacts.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/notify/other/lhjcontacts.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
- ANIMAL RABIES

*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)*