

Rabies Summary Guide for Veterinarians

For more information please contact the BCCDC
Public Health Veterinarian: 778-677-7790



BC Centre for Disease Control
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Epidemiology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caused by rabies virus (family Rhabdoviridae) - can infect all mammals In BC, bats are the only known reservoir. Estimated 0.5% of bats in wild are infected although 13% of tested bats are positive 11 non-bat animal cases reported in BC between 1969-2014 (cats (5), skunk (4), beaver (1), horse (1)) 2 human rabies cases in BC due to bat exposures in 2003 and 2019 		
Transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Via contact with infected saliva or neurologic tissue through a bite, scratch, fresh break in skin or intact mucus membranes Incubation period (IP) in animals: 2 weeks - months. Can transmit rabies up to 10 days before showing signs 		
Zoonotic Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local public health authorities are responsible for assessing and managing risk in potentially exposed persons Veterinarians should advise clients that rabies is zoonotic and encourage them to consult their physician or local public health authority. Discuss any human health concerns with local public health authorities (contact info in Appendix B of <i>the Rabies Guidelines for Veterinarians</i>) 		
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rabies vaccine is recommended, but not required by law in BC. Vaccines available for cats, dogs, ferrets and livestock 		
Clinical Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dumb form: Throat and masseter muscles paralyzed, excessive salivation, inability to swallow. Progressive paralysis results in death. Furious form: Aggression, loss of fear, unprovoked attacks, seizure, loss of muscle coordination. Progressive paralysis results in death. Bats usually exhibit the dumb form with loss of flight and daytime appearances 		
Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BATS - Acceptable methods: volatile anesthetic overdose, cervical dislocation, a anesthesia w/CO₂ followed by injectable barbiturate 		
<pre> graph LR A[Domestic animal exposure] --> B[Consult BCCDC public health vet: 778-677-7790] B --> C{Rabies vaccine up-to-date} B --> D{Unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, status unknown} C --> E[Vaccinate w/in 7d of exposure No further action] D --> F[Vaccinate w/in 7 days or ASAP] F --> G[Suspect rabies source animal available for testing] G -- Yes --> H[Ship to CFIA lab] G -- No --> I[Veterinary management, may incl. isolation and observation] H --> J{Animal is rabies +} J -- No --> K[No further action] J -- Yes --> I </pre>			
Sample Submission to CFIA Lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small animals <500g (eg bats): entire carcass Most animals: submit head Large animals >100kg: submit brain and cervical spinal cord 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use ice-packs if outside temperature >5°C Use INTERNET EXPLORER to complete e-submission form: http://www.inspection.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-aboutcfia-sujetacia/STAGING/text-texte/c2908V1_re_1396296694437_eng.pdf Include rabies@bccdc.ca as 'other email address' 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Place specimen in 1st leak-proof bag & close tightly Attach label with sample ID to inner bag Wrap bag in absorbent material Place 1st bag in 2nd leak-proof bag Place bags and completed sample submission form in shipping box and seal
Shipment	Ship with a <u>courier</u> as <i>exempt animal species</i> or <i>category B</i> depending on risk (Purolator is most familiar with the lab)	R-UNIT, LETHBRIDGE LABORATORY CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY TOWNSHIP ROAD 9-1 LETHBRIDGE, AB T1J 3Z4	For weekend or holiday testing call ADRI at 403-382-5559
Helpful Hints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must use Internet Explorer to complete the e-submission form (other browsers like Chrome or Firefox or Safari won't work) Samples can be refrigerated or frozen. Testing will be delayed if the sample still frozen when it arrives at the lab 		