

## Rabies

### Guidance for Law Enforcement

The Administrative Rules of Montana, Sections 32.3.1201 and 37.114.571, require that all animal bite situations involving a human be reported immediately to either your local health officer, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) at 406-444-0273, or the Montana Department of Livestock at 406-444-2043.

#### **Animal Bites to Humans from Domestic Dogs, Cats and Ferrets:**

- Domestic dogs, cats and ferrets include all domestic breeds of dogs and cats and ferrets born and raised in captivity for purposes of being pets.
  - Dogs that are part dog and part wolf are not considered domestic dogs and should be treated as wild animals.
- Persons bitten by a domestic pet should immediately wash the bite wound with soap and water and consult with a physician.
- Should there not be a prepared form the following information should be gathered by the investigating officer:
  - Name and demographic/locating information of the bite victim.
  - The date of the bite.
  - The area of the body bitten.
  - The type of animal inflicting bite (for dogs and cats, include breed/color).
  - Name of the animal (e.g. Sparky, Daisy).
  - Name and demographic/locating information of the animal owner.
  - Name of the animal's veterinarian.
  - Copy of the animal's latest rabies vaccination record, if available.
  - The current health status and location of the biting animal.
- In all domestic dog, cat and ferret bite situations involving a human, rabies exposure must be ruled out by one of the following actions **regardless of the rabies vaccination status of the animal**:
  - Holding the live animal in quarantine, or impound, for a ten day period with the day of the bite being day zero.
    - This can be done if the animal is healthy and behaving normally and the owners want to keep the animal
    - The animal should be declared healthy by a licensed veterinarian or suitable representative at the start of the quarantine period AND on day 10. If at any point during the 10 day quarantine the animal exhibits a change in behavior the animal must be examined by the veterinarian. If her or she feels the symptoms or behavior change may be due to rabies the animal must be tested for rabies.
    - Confinement can occur at the owner's residence provided that the local public health officials are confident that the owners will be compliant.
    - If compliance is questionable, the animal can be placed in quarantine at an animal pound or with a licensed veterinarian at the owner's expense.
  - The animal must be examined by a veterinarian if it develops symptoms, exhibits a change in behavior or dies during the ten day period. If the veterinarian feels o Having the animal killed or euthanized and the brain/head (including the brain stem) submitted to the Montana Department of Livestock Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (406-994-4885) for rabies testing.
    - This can be done if the owners no longer want to keep the animal or can also be considered in other unusual circumstances.
  - All expenses incurred in quarantining, impounding or destroying and testing a domestic dog, cat or ferret are the responsibility of the animal owner.

- If the animal cannot be readily located, efforts to locate and secure the animal should be made. If the animal cannot be located, contact your local health department or DPHHS at 406-444-0273 in every animal bite situation.

### Animal Bites From Animals other than Domestic Dogs, Cats or Ferrets

- These species of animals include:
  - o Wild animals (e.g. bats, skunks, raccoons)
  - o Captive wild animals (e.g. monkeys, tigers, zoo animals, circus animals)
  - o Hybrids of domestic and wild animals (e.g. wolf and dog cross)
  - o Domestic livestock such as cattle, horses, pigs, and goats. This includes domesticated wild animals such as bison or elk.
  - o Rodents and rabbits.
- Persons bitten by any animal should immediately wash the bite wound with soap and water and consult with a physician.
- Contact your local public health department or the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.
- If possible, keep the animal in a secure area to prevent escape until further instructions can be provided.
- Wild animals that bite an individual cannot be held for observation, testing the animal's brain will be needed to rule out rabies.
- The following information should be gathered by the investigating officer:
  - o Name and demographic/locating information of the bite victim.
  - o The date of the bite.
  - o The area of the body bitten.
  - o The type of animal inflicting bite.
  - o Description of the animal.
  - o Is it a captive animal or hybrid?
  - o Name and demographic/locating information of the owner.
  - o Name of the animal's veterinarian.
  - o Copy of the captive animal's latest rabies vaccination record if available.
  - o The current health status and location of the biting animal.

### Laboratory Testing Information

- Brain/head should be removed by licensed veterinarian only.
- Brain, including brain stem, should be sent to the Montana Department of Livestock Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VDL) (Call 406-994-4885 for details)
  - o Mailing address is:

Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory	UPS/FEDEX Address
Marsh Laboratory 1911 West Lincoln	South 19 <sup>th</sup> and Lincoln
P. O. Box 997	Bozeman, MT 59718
Bozeman, MT 59718	
- Laboratory analysis for rabies typically costs \$30.00 for small animals and \$55.00 for large animals. A carcass disposal fee may also be charged. Please contact the laboratory directly for specific information.
- Carcass disposal costs \$25.00 per hundredweight regardless of species. The minimum cost for an entire dog or cat will be \$25.00. The laboratory will ABSOLUTELY accept intact heads. Their preference is to receive intact heads for small animals. The only time they request that the brain be removed is for large animals. There is no charge for brain removal.

- Brain should never be frozen or preserved in formalin; it should be shipped on ice. Head or brain should be refrigerated and ship on cold packs. Freezing may result in delay in testing turnaround time due to thawing and may interfere with interpretation by yielding false positives.
  - For shipping protocols, questions about weekend services, test times, results, etc., please contact the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at 406-994-4885.

## Packaging and Mailing

- It is the responsibility of the submitter to adhere to strict packaging requirements of the delivery service to be used. Contact the respective UPS ([www.ups.com](http://www.ups.com)), FEDEX ([www.fedex.com](http://www.fedex.com)), or USPS ([www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com)) websites or post masters for further instructions.
- Recommendations for packaging and mailing.

Place the head and brain in two leak proof containers (for instance; ziploc bags, trash bags, tuperware). If the head is submitted, place absorbent material at the site of decapitation to minimize blood leakage. Place adequate amount of absorbent material between the outside shipping box and the sealed specimen to absorb any potential leakage that may seep through to the external box. The outer mailing box must be of sufficient strength to withstand normal delivery handling, dropping or crushing. Place submission forms in sealed plastic bag. Use ice pack to keep specimen chilled especially during warm months. Do not ship entire carcass except for small rodents and bats. Sending entire larger carcass in the summer months could result in rapid decomposition that will preclude testing.

- Contact the laboratory for instructions prior to mailing near weekends or holidays.

## Animal Bite/Disease Reporting Information

- Animal bites and other possible rabies exposures should be reported immediately to the local health department.
  - Your local health department will report the incident to DPHHS.
  - In the event your local health department is not available, contact DPHHS' Communicable Disease Section at 406-444-0273.
- Information that should be reported to the health department:
  - Type of animal.
  - Name and contact information of the owner of the animal.
  - Name and contact information of the person exposed (if different than owner).
  - Rabies vaccination history of animal (if applicable).
  - Rabies symptoms/signs of animal (if applicable).
- Symptoms such as significant change in behavior or neurologic deficits should also be reported.
  - Date exposure occurred.
  - Circumstances surrounding exposure.
- The health department will follow up with the owner and the exposed person if warranted.

## Important Contact Numbers

- Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services - Communicable Disease/Epidemiology Section (406) 444-0273
- Montana Department of Livestock Animal Health Division (406) 444-2043
- Montana Department of Livestock Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (406) 994-4885
- After hours emergency contact number for the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (local and out of state). (406) 444-0273

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