

Rabies Guidance for Law Enforcement

The Administrative Rules of Montana, Sections 32.3.1201 and 37.114.203, require that all animal bite situations involving a human be reported immediately to your local health officer. If the local health department is unavailable, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) may be reached at 406-444-0273.

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.

- The following information should be gathered by the investigating officer for public health reporting purposes:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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.
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- If the animal requires euthanization with a firearm, please make every effort to avoid shooting the animal in the head. This complicates rabies testing, and may render the sample unsuitable for testing.

- Under the Administrative Rules of Montana 37.114.571, the local health officer or designee is required to follow up on potential rabies exposures. In **all** domestic dog, cat and ferret bite situations involving a human, rabies exposure must be ruled out by one of the following actions:
 - The animal must be observed in an animal shelter, veterinary facility, or other adequate facility for ten days following the incidence of the bite.
 - Home observation may be considered, and is at the discretion of the local health officer.
 - Consider the following to determine where the animal should be observed:
 - Vaccination status
 - Epidemiology of rabies in your area
 - Reliability of pet owner
 - Pet owner education
 - A veterinarian must examine the animal if it develops symptoms of illness, has a change in behavior, or dies during the ten-day period.
 - If the veterinarian deems testing for rabies is warranted, the animal must be 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.
 - All expenses incurred in quarantining, impounding or destroying and testing a domestic dog, cat or ferret are the responsibility of the animal owner unless your jurisdiction otherwise supports these expenses.

- If the animal cannot be readily located, efforts to locate and secure the animal should be made. If the animal cannot be located, the investigating officer must contact the local public health office so the need for post exposure prophylaxis can be determined, and the individual who was potentially exposed can be counseled regarding risks and benefits of treatment.

Animal Bites to Humans from Animals other than Domestic Dogs, Cats or Ferrets

- These species of animals include:
 - Wild animals (e.g. bats, skunks, raccoons)
 - Captive wild animals (e.g. monkeys, tigers, zoo animals, circus animals)
 - Hybrids of domestic and wild animals (e.g. wolf and dog mixed breed)
 - Domestic livestock such as cattle, horses, pigs, and goats. This includes domesticated wild animals such as bison or elk.
 - Rodents and rabbits.
- Advise the individual bitten by any animal should immediately wash the bite wound with soap and water and consult with a physician.
- If the individual refuses to seek treatment, advise the individual to contact your local public health department to determine the risk of rabies exposure. If the local health department is unavailable, he or she may contact 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 for rabies is the only option to rule out rabies. If it is not possible or desired to euthanize the animal for testing the individual exposed may elect to proceed with post exposure prophylaxis.
- 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.
 - Description of the animal.
 - Is it a captive animal or hybrid?
 - Name and demographic/locating information of the owner.
 - Name of the animal's veterinarian, if applicable.
 - The current health status and location of the biting animal.

Laboratory Testing Information

Animal control/law enforcement or veterinarians entities may submit specimens for testing to the Montana Department of Livestock Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (MVDL). It is recommended to utilize a veterinarian's office when specimens from large animals need to be submitted.

- Fresh brain/head, including brain stem, should be sent to MVDL (Call 406-994-4885 for details)
 - The mailing address is:

Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory	UPS/FEDEX Address:
P. O. Box 997	1911 West Lincoln
Bozeman, MT 59718	Bozeman, MT 59718
- Brain/head should be removed by a licensed veterinarian, if possible. Please see the MVDL website for submission instructions at <http://liv.mt.gov/Portals/146/lab/RabiesSubmissionGuidelines.pdf>. Bats and other small rodents may be shipped whole. Be sure the animal is dead.
 - Helpful tip: Starter fluid (ether) can be used to euthanize a bat!
- The SV-43 form must be included with every submission and can be found online at <https://liv.mt.gov/Portals/146/lab/RabiesSubmissionGuidelines.pdf>
- Laboratory analysis for rabies typically costs \$31.50 for small animals and \$58.00 for large animals. A carcass disposal fee may also be charged (excluding bats/small rodents). Please contact the laboratory directly for specific information.
- Brain should never be frozen or preserved in formalin; the head or brain should be refrigerated and be shipped on cold packs. Freezing may result in delay in testing turnaround time due to thawing and may render a sample unsuitable for testing.
 - For shipping protocols, questions about weekend services, test times, results, etc., please contact the Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at 406-994-4885.

Let the Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory determine if a sample is unsuitable in cases of trauma (i.e. shot in the head), frozen, or if the animal is in early stages of decay. *Do not assume a sample is unsuitable in cases of human exposure.*

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), FEDEX (www.fedex.com), or USPS (www.usps.com) websites or post masters for further instructions.
 - Please see MVDL's specimen shipping guide for shipping instructions at http://liv.mt.gov/Portals/146/lab/5.7.1.2_MVDL_Specimen_Shipping_Guide.pdf
- 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 relevant information to DPHHS
 - In the event your local health department is not available, contact the DPHHS Communicable Disease Section at 406-444-0273
- The health department and their partners 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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