

Protocol for Potential Rabies Exposure from Bats

Encountering a bat poses a significant rabies risk to humans and pets. Treat any known or suspected physical interaction seriously, as bat bites can go unnoticed, leaving little evidence of a wound. Evaluate situations carefully, even if unsure about physical contact, such as finding a bat in the bedroom or near a cat.



STEP 1

Immediate Action

Contact WCPH (Whitman County Public Health) without delay 509.332.6752

Determine Risk – WCPH will determine if the bat encounter poses a risk of rabies exposure to a person or pet and arrange for testing at the state public health laboratory if necessary.

Gather Information – Gather essential information like Name, Address, and Phone Number, to facilitate follow-up.

Instruct Caller – Instruct the caller not to release a live bat or discard a dead bat until WCPH determines if testing for rabies is required.

STEP 2

Ensure Pet's Rabies Vaccination

Check the rabies vaccination status of the potentially exposed pet.

If WCPH confirms potential exposure to rabies:

Even if the pet is up-to-date on vaccinations. Encourage them to schedule an immediate appointment with a veterinarian for a rabies vaccination.

Consult WCPH for the appropriate observation and confinement period for the exposed pet, considering pending bat rabies test results (Step 3).

STEP 3

Testing for Pet-Only Exposure (no person exposed).

Test the Bat for Rabies – Pet owners can arrange for testing at the following locations:

Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Lab (509-335-9696)

Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Lab (541-737-3261).

WCPH can provide guidance on safe bat transport and humane euthanasia methods before rabies testing.

Negative Test Result – Indicates the pet is not at risk of rabies infection.

Positive Test Result or is untestable, the pet should be observed for symptoms and confined as directed by WCPH

Protocol for Potential Rabies Exposures in Dogs & Cats



When a Dog/Cat Bites or Scratches a Person:

Animal does NOT exhibit signs of rabies – instruct the owner to confine it securely (preventing escape and additional bites or scratches) for **ten days** from the date of the incident.

If the animal remains healthy throughout the ten-days, it is likely that the animal does not have rabies. However, if the animal is unvaccinated or not up to date on vaccinations, administer a rabies vaccination.

Animal exhibits signs of rabies – dies or requires humane euthanasia, **contact WCPH** to discuss rabies testing.

When a Dog/Cat is Exposed to a Rabid Animal:

Refer to the steps outlined in the section above.

Contact WCPH for guidance on observation and confinement recommendations. The length of the confinement period typically ranges from 45 to 120 days (4 months), based on the exposed animal's vaccination.

