### Rabies Summary Guide for Veterinarians

**Public Health Veterinarian:** 778-677-7790

#### Epidemiology
- 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
- 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
- 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 the Rabies Guidelines for Veterinarians)

#### Prevention
- The rabies vaccine is recommended, but not required by law in BC. Vaccines available for cats, dogs, ferrets and livestock

#### Clinical Presentation
- **Dumb form:** Throat and masseter muscles paralyzed, excessive salvation, 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
- BATS - Acceptable methods: volatile anesthetic overdose, cervical dislocation, anesthesia w/CO₂ followed by injectable barbiturate

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### Sample Submission to CFIA Lab

- Small animals <500g (eg bats): entire carcass
- Most animals: submit head
- Large animals >100kg: submit brain and cervical spinal cord

- Use ice-packs if outside temperature > 5°C
- Include rabies@bccdc.ca as ‘other email address’

### Shipment

- Ship with a courier as exempt animal species or category B 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
- 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

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**BCCDC Rabies Guidelines for Veterinarians available at [www.bccdc.ca/rabies](http://www.bccdc.ca/rabies)**

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