

Rabies Summary Guide for Veterinarians

For more information please contact the BCCDC

Public Health Veterinarian:

publichealthvet@bccdc.ca



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 ~8% of tested bats are positive 12 non-bat animal cases reported in BC between 1969-2022 (cats (5), skunk (5), 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 to contact a healthcare provider or local public health authority Discuss any human health concerns with local public health authorities (contact info in Appendix A of the Rabies Guidelines for Veterinarians) 		
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, anesthesia w/CO₂ followed by injectable barbiturate 		
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 To complete e-submission form first disable PDF from opening directly in browser and download form See CFIA guidance for completing submission form 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)	CFIA LETHBRIDGE LABORATORY (ADRI) 225090 TOWNSHIP ROAD 91 LETHBRIDGE COUNTY, ALBERTA T1J 5R7	Contact for Lethbridge Rabies Lab 403-382-5559 cfia.rabieswest-rageouest.acia@canada.ca
Helpful Hints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must download the e-submission form to your desktop and open it directly on the computer and not in the browser samples can be refrigerated or frozen. Testing will be delayed if the sample is still frozen when it arrives at the lab. 		