

Heighten Rabies Awareness

May 7, 2024

Bats are the primary species identified with rabies in Illinois. The likelihood of human-bat contact increases during summer because of bat migration and feeding patterns. Although not all bats carry rabies, bats in Winnebago County and the surrounding area have tested positive for the virus in prior years. In 2023, two (2) bats tested positive for rabies in Winnebago County.

Suspect rabies for bat exposures if:

- Any physical contact with a bat has occurred
- An individual awakens and finds a bat in a room or if a bat is seen in the room of a sleeping person
- A bat is found in the room of an unattended child
- A bat is seen near a mentally impaired or intoxicated person
- A bat is found near an unattended pet

NOTE: Bats have very small teeth. Therefore, a bite from a bat may not be felt and may leave marks that are not easily seen.

Other wild animals may be carriers of rabies. To help determine rabies exposure risk in other species, please refer to the *Rabies Post Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Assessment Decision Tree* included with this Alert.

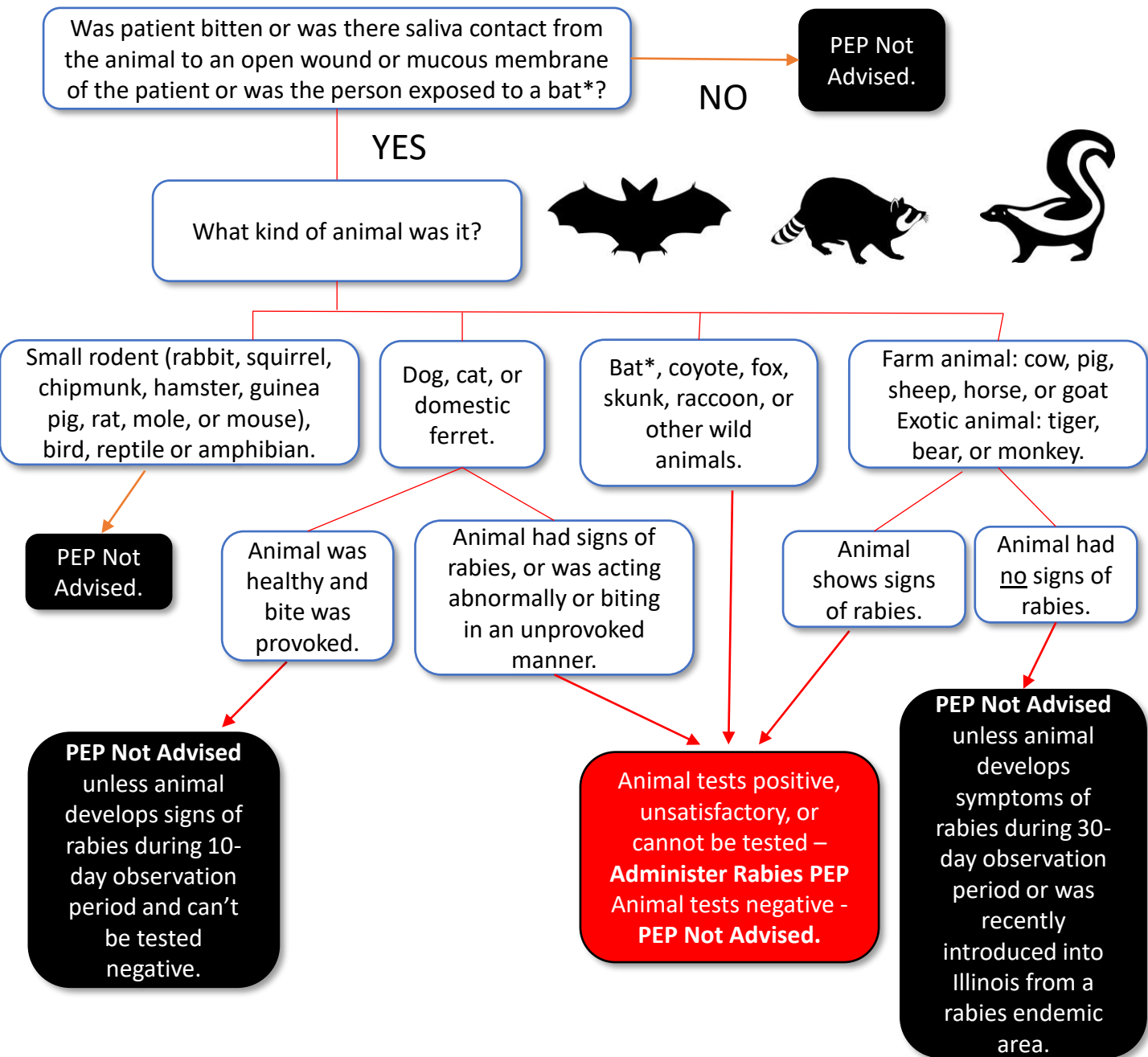
If a rabies exposure is suspected, **contact the Winnebago County Health Department at 815-720-4050. Available 24/7.** WCHD will provide guidance along with a recommendation for PEP if necessitated.

Additional Resources:

- WCHD Rabies Information: <https://publichealth.wincoil.gov/how-do-i/report-an-animal-bite-or-rabies-exposure/>
- IDPH Rabies Information: <https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/rabies.html>
- CDC Rabies Information: https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/specific_groups/hcp/index.html

Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) ASSESSMENT DECISION TREE

Health care providers should consult with their local health department about situations of concern.



*Bat bites may be difficult to see. Contact your local health department for consultation on suspected bat exposures. Every effort should be made to capture and to test the bat involved in the exposure incident. If the patient can provide adequate history that no direct exposure occurred, then no treatment is necessary. If the patient is an unobserved child, a person who was asleep, intoxicated, or mentally disabled, then PEP may be indicated. If someone woke up to a bat or has bare skin contact with a bat and animal cannot be tested, then PEP is indicated.

Additional notes:

- **Contact Winnebago County Health Department (WCHD) at 815-720-4050.**
- Consult with WCHD about the animal bite/exposure and the need for Rabies PEP.
- Illinois law requires that administration of rabies PEP and/or exposure to rabies be reported to your local health department.
- For dogs, cats, and ferrets, provoked exposures may include:
 - Attempting to feed or taking food from an animal
 - Having contact with an injured animal
 - Entering an animal's territory
 - Petting or playing with an animal
 - Handling an animal
 - Attempting to break up a fight between animals
 - Walking, running, or riding a bicycle past an animal
- Rabies PEP is medically urgent, not an emergency. The severity and location of a wound (severe wounds or obvious wounds near head and neck to be given highest priority), and the expected interval between the time of the bite and receipt of rabies test results should be considered when deciding to begin PEP while awaiting test results.
- If the animal is captured and tests negative for rabies after PEP has begun, PEP may be discontinued.



Winnebago County

Health Department



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