

HEALTH ADVISORY

Three Rabid Bats in Kitsap ~ Rabies Facts & Guidelines

October 8, 2014

Dear Kitsap County Providers,

I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with the Washington State Guidelines for Rabies Prevention and PEP Recommendations (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/RabiesPEPGuidance.pdf>) as three Kitsap County bats have recently tested positive for rabies at the Washington State Public Health Lab (PHL). One bat from Bainbridge tested positive on 09/18/2014 and two were positive on 10/03/2014, one each from Kingston and Bremerton. Although rabies is endemic in Washington, having three bats test positive in a short period is unusual. Since March 2014, 15 bats from Kitsap with known or potential human exposure have been tested; these 3 are the only ones that have tested positive.

The Washington State Guidelines serve as an in-depth reference tool with highlights summarized below.

Reporting requirements in Washington State

- All healthcare providers, healthcare facilities, and veterinarians are required to immediately notify the local health jurisdiction (LHJ) regarding suspected rabies exposures.

Contacting Kitsap Public Health

- Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm (360) 337-5235
- After hours and weekends (360) 415-2005 Regional Duty Officer Pager
OR
“911” ask for the Public Health Regional Duty Officer

Washington State rabies facts

- Bats are currently the only known reservoir for rabies in Washington State.
- Rabies is not endemic in raccoons, skunks, foxes, or other wild carnivores in this state; however routine surveillance testing for these animals is not performed in Washington.
- Rarely, other animals are bitten by bats and may become rabid in Washington State.
- Historical animal testing for rabies in Washington State:
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/IllnessandDisease/Rabies/RabiesActivity>

Criteria for assessing risk of rabies exposure

- Consider the following: (1) animal type and health/behavior; (2) geographic location of exposure; (3) animal vaccination status; (4) circumstances of exposure (provoked vs. unprovoked); (5) likelihood the animal could have been exposed to another rabid animal).
- Provoked bites may include: invasion of animal’s territory, assisting an injured animal, startling or trying to capture an animal, coming between an animal and its young, taking food away from an

animal, acting aggressively toward an animal, breaking up a fight between animals, or attempting to pet, touch, or feed an unfamiliar animal.

- If you are unsure, please contact Kitsap Public Health (360) 337-5235.

Timing of rabies post-exposure prophylaxis

- Administration of rabies PEP following exposure to a rabid animal is considered a medical urgency, not an emergency.
- Kitsap Public Health District is available for consultation and to help facilitate testing the animal for rabies at the Washington State Public Health Laboratories if needed.
- It may be appropriate to initiate PEP prior to receiving test results depending on behavior and appearance of animal, severity and location of bite, whether the exposure was provoked, and the species of the animal.
- In general, PEP should be started immediately for a bite from any animal highly suspected to have rabies. Immediate PEP should also be considered for bites to the head and neck from a high risk animal or severe bites from a wild carnivore from a rabies endemic area. For dog, cat, and ferret exposures where the animal was in or imported from a country with endemic canine rabies, providers should consider starting PEP immediately given the elevated risk of the animal being rabid even if the animal is being observed.
- If PEP is started prior to the availability of animal testing results, PEP can be discontinued if the animal is later found to be negative for rabies.
- Since incubation periods of more than 1 year have been reported for human rabies cases, PEP should be administered regardless of the time interval since a documented or likely exposure to rabies occurred.

Please call (360) 337-5235 to report suspected exposure or if you have additional questions. This message will be posted on our website http://www.kitsappublichealth.org/healthcare/disease_alerts.php.

Sincerely,

Scott Lindquist MD MPH
Health Officer
Kitsap Public Health District

Categories of Kitsap Public Health District messages:

Health Alert Requires immediate action or attention; highest level of importance

Health Advisory May not require immediate action; provides important information for a specific incident or situation

Health Update Unlikely to require immediate action; provides updated information regarding an incident or situation