



Eric J. Holcomb  
Governor

Kristina M. Box, MD, FACOG  
State Health Commissioner

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TO: All Local Health Departments and Rabies Specimen Submitters

FROM: Jen Brown, DVM, MPH, DACVPM  
State Public Health Veterinarian

SUBJECT: Submission of Animal Specimens for Rabies Testing

This notice provides guidance for submitting animal specimens to the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) Rabies Laboratory. *Please note that current IDOH policy has **not** changed; this document is intended to serve both as a reminder and an updated reference.*

The IDOH Rabies Laboratory provides testing for animals suspected of having rabies in order to:

1. Assist health care providers in treating people with animal bites or exposures,
2. Assist veterinarians in ruling out rabies in animals with compatible illnesses, and
3. Conduct surveillance among animal species that are possible rabies vectors in Indiana.

Rabies testing is provided at no charge by the IDOH Rabies Laboratory. To maintain rabies testing as a free service, the IDOH Rabies Laboratory requires that animal specimens meet the following criteria before accepting and testing specimens:

### 1. Dogs, cats, and ferrets

- a. Dogs, cats, and ferrets that have bitten a person
  - i. If the animal is healthy, then observation for 10 days is **required**. Animals that survive the observation period do not need to be tested for rabies.
  - ii. If the animal has illness or injuries requiring euthanasia for humane reasons, then a specimen should be promptly submitted for rabies testing. Prior approval from IDOH is not required.
  - iii. If the animal dies or develops clinical signs compatible with rabies during the observation period, then a specimen should be promptly submitted for rabies testing. Prior approval from IDOH is not required.
- b. Dogs, cats, and ferrets that have not bitten a person
  - i. If the animal has clinical signs compatible with rabies as determined by a veterinarian, then a specimen may be submitted for rabies testing, even if a bite has not occurred.



- c. Submission of specimens from dogs, cats, or ferrets for rabies testing under any other circumstances requires approval from the IDOH Zoonotic and Vector-Borne Disease Public Health Investigator at 317-232-3084.

## 2. Livestock animals

- a. Livestock animals that have bitten a person
  - i. If the animal is healthy, then observation for 14 days is **required**. Animals that survive the observation period do not need to be tested for rabies.
  - ii. If the animal has illness or injuries requiring euthanasia for humane reasons, then a specimen should be promptly submitted for rabies testing. Prior approval from IDOH is not required. Livestock animal testing should be coordinated with Purdue University's Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory.
  - iii. If the animal dies or develops clinical signs compatible with rabies during the observation period, then a specimen should be promptly submitted for rabies testing. Prior approval from IDOH is not required. Livestock animal testing should be coordinated with Purdue University's Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory.
- b. Livestock animals that have not bitten a person
  - i. If the animal has clinical signs compatible with rabies as determined by a veterinarian, then a specimen may be submitted for rabies testing, even if a bite has not occurred. Livestock animal testing should be coordinated with Purdue University's Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory.
- c. Submission of specimens from livestock animals under any other circumstances requires approval from the IDOH Zoonotic and Vector-Borne Disease Public Health Investigator at 317-232-3084.

## 3. Skunks, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, or other carnivores

- a. Wild carnivore species that have bitten or scratched a person, pet, or livestock animal
  - i. The biting animal should be euthanized, and a specimen should be promptly submitted for rabies testing.
- b. Wild carnivore species that have not bitten or scratched a person, pet, or livestock animal
  - i. If the animal has clinical signs compatible with rabies, then rabies testing may be considered, even if a bite or scratch has not occurred. Submission



requires approval from the IDOH Zoonotic and Vector-Borne Disease Public Health Investigator at 317-232-3084.

#### **4. Bats**

- a. Bats should be euthanized and promptly submitted for rabies testing in the following circumstances:
  - i. The bat has bitten or scratched a person, pet, or livestock animal.
  - ii. The bat has had direct contact with a person's bare skin, and a bite or scratch cannot be ruled out with a high degree of confidence.
  - iii. There is evidence of contact between the bat and a pet or livestock animal.
  - iv. The bat is found in the living space of a human dwelling, especially where there is evidence that the bat has been in the same room with a person who was asleep, a person who was impaired by drugs or alcohol, a person with cognitive impairment, or an unattended child.
- b. If a bat is found in a public or common area where it is reasonable to suspect that human exposure could have occurred (e.g., a high-traffic area at a playground), then rabies testing should be considered. Please contact the IDOH Zoonotic and Vector-Borne Disease Public Health Investigator at 317-232-3084.
- c. Bats found sick, dying, or dead outdoors should not be submitted if there is no evidence of exposure to people, pets, or livestock animals.

#### **5. Small prey animals (e.g., squirrels, chipmunks, mice, rats, rabbits, voles, moles, shrews, hamsters, gerbils, etc.)**

- a. Small prey animals rarely carry rabies. Submission requires approval from the IDOH Zoonotic and Vector-Borne Disease Public Health Investigator at 317-232-3084.

#### **Contact us**

Zoonotic and Vector-Borne Disease Public Health Investigator	317-232-3084
Zoonotic and Vector-Borne Disease Program	317-233-7125
After hours consultation (LHDs, health care providers, veterinarians only)	317-233-1325
Rabies Laboratory	317-921-5834
	or
	317-921-5842