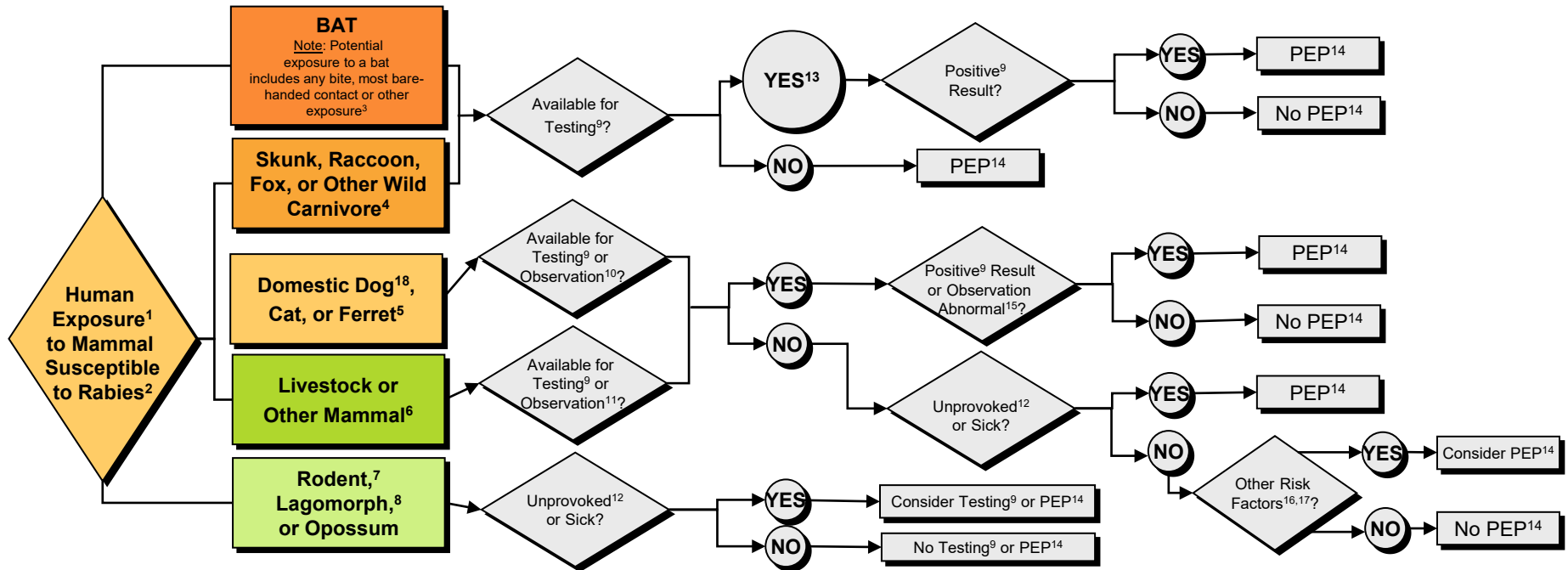


ALGORITHM FOR RABIES POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP) RECOMMENDATIONS



The Epidemiology Unit is available for consultation Monday-Friday 8:00 am – 5:00 pm at 619-692-8499 or for urgent consultation after-hours by calling 858-565-5255.

Algorithm adapted from figure in the following article: Moran GJ, Talan DA, Mower W, et al. Appropriateness of Rabies Postexposure Prophylaxis Treatment for Animal Exposures. JAMA 2000;284,1001-1007.

- 1 Exposure is defined as a bite or scratch that breaks the skin or open wound or mucous membrane exposure to a susceptible animal's saliva, CSF or neural tissue. Contact with the animal's blood, urine or feces does not constitute exposure to rabies.
- NOTE:** If the animal is a bat, please refer to footnote 3.
- 2 Only mammals are susceptible to rabies. Mammals are warm-blooded vertebrates that nourish their young with milk and have skin usually covered with hair (e.g., birds, reptiles and fish are not mammals).
- 3 Bare-handed contact with a bat by an adult may not warrant rabies PEP if the adult can be certain a bite, scratch, or mucous membrane exposure did not occur (e.g., 2-fingers with intact skin pick up bat by wing). "Other exposure" to a bat may include sleeping in a room with a bat, or an adult finding a bat in the room of an unattended child, mentally disabled or intoxicated person.
- 4 Examples of other wild carnivores include coyotes, wolves, bobcats, bears, badgers, and weasels.
- 5 Ferrets are illegal in California. The biting ferret should be confiscated and put in 10-day isolation by the [local animal control agency](#) determined by zip code. CA Department of Fish & Wildlife should be [notified](#) to arrange for disposition following isolation.
- 6 Livestock are domestic farm animals such as cows, horses, goats, pigs, and sheep. Examples of "other mammals" include hybrids (e.g., wolf-dog), primates, deer, hedgehogs, moles, and other omnivores and herbivores.
- 7 Small rodents are animals such as rats, mice, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, squirrels, gophers, chipmunks, and voles. Large rodents, such as beavers and woodchucks (groundhogs), are considered at higher risk for rabies than small rodents.
- 8 Lagomorphs are animals such as rabbits, hares, and pikas.
- 9 Information about animal rabies testing is available on the San Diego County Public Health Laboratory [Rabies Requisition Form](#) and [Epidemiology Unit](#) websites. Per [CA Code of Regulations, Section 2606](#), laboratory examination of animals known or suspected to have rabies or biting animals that have died or been euthanized or killed are under the authority of the local health department; rabies testing may not be required in all circumstances. Indeterminate test results are managed like positive results.
- 10 Observation of domestic dogs, cats, and ferrets involves a 10-day period of strict confinement following the exposure date (regardless of the animal's vaccination status) and is coordinated by the [local animal control agency](#) by zip code. See also footnote 16.
- 11 If the public health officer judges the risk of rabies in the biting animal to be acceptably low, a prolonged 30-day isolation period may be an option for rare, endangered or valuable animals. The bite victim *could* immediately start PEP.
- 12 "Unprovoked" exposures are rare and typically involve an animal exhibiting unusual behavior considering the animal's species, history, and circumstances. Circumstances of exposure incidents are best obtained directly from those exposed.
- 13 Bat results are available within 24 hours of submission to San Diego County [Public Health Laboratory](#). Non-bat wildlife results are available within 24 hours if submitted Mon-Fri 8-5 PM; Epidemiology Unit is available for consult after hours at 858-565-5255.
- 14 The decision to administer rabies PEP is ultimately the responsibility of the person exposed in consultation with their healthcare provider. Bites from small rodents⁷ rarely warrant rabies PEP unless circumstances are highly unusual.
- 15 Abnormal observation involves the animal developing clinical signs suggestive of rabies as assessed by an animal health professional (e.g., excessive salivation, unsteady gait, abnormal behavior), in which case the animal will be immediately euthanized and tested for rabies.
- 16 Examples of "other" factors: a) severe bites to head, face or neck should prompt immediate PEP (optional discontinuation if rabies ruled-out), b) animal is known or likely to be unvaccinated for rabies (see footnote 17), c) human exposure or recent animal origin is out-of-county, where rabies prevalence is endemic or unknown, d) animal lives primarily outdoors and/or had recent exposure to a wild animal susceptible to rabies, e) there is no evidence of animal ownership (e.g., wild/stray).
- 17 Rabies vaccines are only licensed for dogs, cats, ferrets and certain livestock (e.g., sheep, cattle, horses). CA law requires only dogs be vaccinated for rabies. Dogs should receive their first rabies vaccination by 4 months of age (considered protective at 28 days post-vaccine); a rabies vaccine booster is due 1 year following the first vaccine, then every 3 years. Cat rabies vaccine schedules depend on the vaccine product.
- 18 Refer to [CA Health & Safety Code 121680](#) for dogs serving as guides for blind owners. Refer to [CA Health & Safety Code 121685](#) for dogs employed by law enforcement agencies.

Additional information available in the [California Compendium of Rabies Control and Prevention](#) on the California Department of Public Health rabies [website](#), as well as on the CDC rabies [website](#).

