

Bite Reporting and Rabies Control

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- **By law, the following *must* be reported to VPH immediately:**
 - **Animal bites to humans (except rodents, rabbits, birds, reptiles)**
 - **Domestic animal bitten by wild mammal**
 - **All potential or confirmed bat exposures to humans or animals**
 - **Animals suspected of being rabid**
- **Teach your staff how to properly submit a specimen for rabies testing**
- **Booster rabies vaccinations in pets exposed to wildlife (protocol below)**

BACKGROUND

In the 1920s-1940s, hundreds of rabid dogs were diagnosed each year in LA County. The risk of rabies from dogs and cats is now far lower because of widespread vaccination and licensing of pets. However, rabies persists locally in bats. Bats are the main carrier of rabies in Southern California. Skunk variants of rabies are currently found in Santa Barbara County and Northern California. Bats, skunks, foxes, raccoons, coyotes, **and even opossums** are all considered potential sources of rabies, based on California and national rabies data. In addition, each year many dogs are imported into the US from countries where the canine variant of rabies still exists (see pg 20).

REPORTING BITES AND RABIES SUSPECT ANIMALS

- **Anyone with knowledge of a bite is legally mandated to report to VPH**, including veterinarians and their staff. Report the following to VPH immediately:
 - Mammals, domestic or wild, that bite a human (see form on pg 58)
 - Domestic mammals (pets or livestock) that come into contact with wildlife (see form on pg 59)
 - Neurologic animals suspected of being rabid (use form on pg 58)
 - Bites from rabbits, squirrels, rats, mice, gophers and other rodents are NOT reportable

RABIES VACCINATION

- The State of California mandates rabies vaccination for dogs, but not for cats. However, some localities require rabies vaccination and/or licensing of cats. (See pg 24).
- The *minimum* age dogs may receive their first rabies vaccination in CA is **three** months of age.



QUARANTINE

- Quarantines of owned animals are usually overseen by VPH at the animal's home
- Quarantines may be completed at shelters or veterinary practices (costs may be incurred at owner's expense)
- Location transfers of quarantined animals are not allowed except in rare circumstances and with prior approval from VPH.

QUARANTINE - MAMMALS BITING PEOPLE

- Any DOMESTIC animal that bit a person must be quarantined and observed for clinical signs of rabies by VPH staff. This is true regardless of the rabies vaccination status of the biting animal. The animal is under quarantine until VPH staff issues a Quarantine Release Notice.
 - For specific quarantine periods, please see the summary flowchart (pg 16)
 - **If animal bit a human DO NOT vaccinate animal for rabies during the quarantine period**
- Domestic biting animals **are not to be euthanized until after the quarantine period** without prior permission from VPH staff
- If the domestic animal is gravely ill or injured, it may be euthanized during the quarantine period for humane reasons without prior permission. **In such cases, the head of the animal must be submitted appropriately for rabies testing** (see pg 18).
- Captive exotic mammals that have bitten a human are quarantined at their facility for at least 30 days (e.g. zoo, marine mammals, etc.)

QUARANTINE - DOMESTIC MAMMALS BIT BY WILDLIFE

- Whenever possible, the wild animal should be humanely euthanized, prepared and submitted to VPH for rabies testing
 - If the wild mammal tests negative for rabies, no quarantine of the domestic animal is required.
 - If the wild mammal is not tested or tests positive for rabies, the domestic animal must be quarantined.
- Quarantine length of the animal depends on its rabies vaccine status at the time of the bite.
 - For specific quarantine periods, please see summary flowchart (pg 17)
 - **If domestic mammal is bit by wildlife and is current on rabies vaccination at the time of the bite, booster immediately, even if the rabies vaccine is not due**
 - **If domestic mammal is bit by wildlife and is NOT current on rabies vaccination at the time of the bite, VPH recommends vaccinating immediately post-bite**
 - **If domestic mammal is bit by wildlife and has NEVER had a rabies vaccination, VPH recommends the Texas protocol: vaccinate immediately after bite, again at week 3 and again at week 8 post-bite.**



NEUROLOGIC ANIMAL SUSPECTED OF BEING RABID

- Isolate the animal and contact our office immediately
- REPORT incident using a Bite Report Form (use form on pg 58 – even if no bite occurred)

RABIES TESTING

- Rabies testing is conducted by the Public Health Lab
- For rabies specimen preparation instructions see pg 18
- Specimen preparation, including decapitation, must be performed by the facility submitting the sample. Only rabies-vaccinated staff should perform decapitations. Exception: Bats are NOT to be decapitated.
- Please complete the appropriate form and call our office to arrange a specimen pickup for rabies testing
- Whenever possible, any WILD mammal that has bitten a human shall be humanely euthanized, prepared and submitted for rabies testing.

BATS

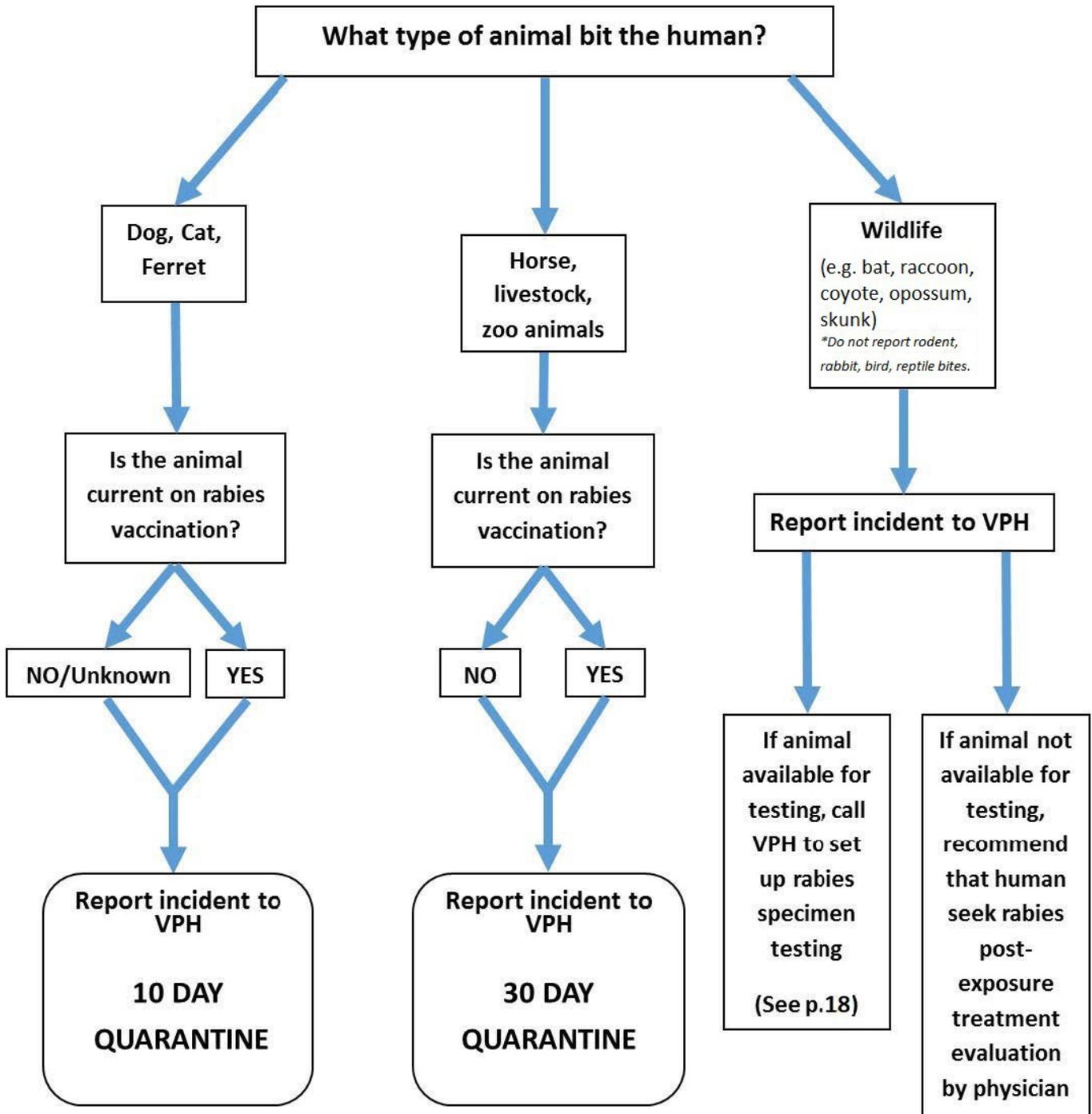
- Any bat that may have had a potential exposure to humans or animals must be reported and tested (e.g. on sidewalk, found in public area, outside a home or business)
- If a bat is found inside the home, near a child or sleeping person it must be reported and tested for rabies, even if a bite is not visualized (see form on pg 60)
- Bites from bats can be very small, painless and go unnoticed.
- If clients call to report a bat or bring in a bat to your clinic – please collect their name and contact information because VPH will need to speak with them. Then provide them with the following information:
 - If you see a dead, sick or injured bat OR there is a bat that may have bitten a person or animal, **do not touch it or release it. Call your local animal control agency for assistance (see pg 19 for list of local animal control agencies).**

RESOURCES

California Compendium of Rabies Control and Prevention, 2012 (see page 65)



Human bitten by an animal



- Healthy animals that bit a human are not to be euthanized during the quarantine period.
- Gravely ill or injured animals that are euthanized during the quarantine period due to humane reasons must be tested for rabies.
- If a pet bit a human and was not up to date on the rabies vaccine at the time of the bite, do NOT vaccinate the pet until after the quarantine period.
- Bites from rodents, rabbits, birds and reptiles are not reportable to VPH
- Report all neurologic animals suspected for being rabid to VPH at (213) 288-7060

Domestic animal bitten by another mammal

