

Rabies Testing

A dog, cat or ferret that bites a person must be confined and observed for signs of rabies for 10 days. If the animal dies prior to the end of the 10 day confinement period, it must be submitted for rabies testing.

Test a suspected animal if a person:

- Is bitten by a bat or other wild animal of concern.
- Is bitten by a domestic animal that cannot be confined and observed for 10 days.
- Has any physical contact with a bat.
- Wakes to find a bat in their room and/or finds a bat in a room with a child or vulnerable adult.

Contact the Minnesota Department of Health at 651-201-5414 if you are concerned about human exposure.

Test a suspected animal if your pet or livestock is:

- Bitten by a bat, skunk or other wild animal of concern.
- If a person is concerned their pet or livestock has been exposed to rabies.



How to capture and submit a bat for rabies testing

- Use a container with a lid, as bats may bite through fabric.
- Wear leather gloves, approach the bat slowly, place the container over the bat, slide the lid into place, flip the container over and secure it closed with tape.
- A live bat may be hand-delivered to the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, during business hours, or euthanized by a veterinarian and shipped prior to submission.
- Animal control officers or pest control professionals may be able to capture and submit a bat.

Proper submission procedures

- Contact the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory prior to submitting samples for rabies testing.
- Whole animals, heads, or unfixed, whole brains (both sides of the cerebrum, cerebellum and brainstem) are acceptable.
- Properly refrigerate and send with ice packs if shipping.
- Brain-only submissions should be placed in a hard container to prevent damage from ice packs during shipping.

Deliver or send specimens to:

Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
1333 Gortner Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108

800-605-8787 or 612-625-8787

Rabies: Animals, People & Testing



A cooperative effort of:
Minnesota Board of Animal Health
Minnesota Department of Health
University of Minnesota
Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association



Rabies in Animals

- Caused by a virus.
- Spread through a bite, saliva, or contact with mucous membranes.
- Any mammal exposed to rabies can develop the disease.
- Skunks and bats are the wildlife carriers in Minnesota.

Prevention for pets and livestock

- Keep dogs, cats, ferrets and horses currently vaccinated.
- Vaccinate livestock if recommended by your veterinarian.
- Keep pets and livestock away from stray and wild animals.
- Do not attract stray or wild animals to your home or yard.
- Report stray animals or those acting unusual to local animal control.



Bites to pets or livestock

- Call your veterinarian to determine if rabies is a concern.
- Talk to your veterinarian when submitting animals for rabies testing.
- Dogs, cats, ferrets, and horses should get a rabies booster within 96 hours (4 days).
- Contact the Minnesota Board of Animal Health at 651-201-6808 if you have questions regarding rabies exposure to your pets or livestock.

Signs in animals

- Staggering
- Walking in circles
- Paralysis
- Agitation
- Lethargy
- Lameness
- Behavioral changes
- Fearfulness
- Depression
- Bellowing in cattle
- May attack animals, people or objects
- Nocturnal animals may be active during the day

Rabies in People

Prevention for people

- Do not approach unfamiliar or wild animals, and teach your children the same.
- Do not keep wild animals as pets.
- Never leave infants or toddlers alone with any animal, including trusted household pets.
- Bat-proof your home.
- Hunters and trappers should avoid animals with abnormal behavior.
- Avoid contact with dogs and cats while traveling, especially internationally.

Bites to people

- Wash bite with soap and water.
- Contact the Minnesota Department of Health at 651-201-5414; you may be advised to do the following:
 - Confine and observe the suspected animal for 10 days.
 - Submit the animal for rabies testing.
 - Receive the rabies vaccine series.
- See your physician for an evaluation.
- Visit www.health.state.mn.us/rabies.

Bat bites

- Bites may leave little or no evidence of wound or puncture.
- People may feel a sting or needle prick sensation.
- Most recent cases of rabies in humans in the U.S. have been due to bat bites that went unrecognized and unreported.

