

Epi Update for Friday, August 30, 2024

CENTER FOR ACUTE DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY (CADE)

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services

Items for this week's Epi Update include

- Bat encounters and rabies risk
- Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis review
- In the news: CDC reports 21 Oropouche cases among travelers returning from Cuba
- Infographic: Rabies exposure management for bat-related incidents

Bat encounters and rabies risk

Rabies consultation calls received by Iowa HHS for potential bat exposures typically peak during late summer and fall. Many of these calls involve bats being found in homes. A person is considered potentially exposed to a bat if they have direct contact with the bat or if they are in the same room as the bat and cannot be sure they weren't bitten (e.g., young children or people who are sleeping).

If a person has potentially been exposed, the bat should be safely captured in a way that preserves its head to allow for rabies testing. There are two laboratories in Iowa that perform rabies testing: the Iowa State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and Iowa's State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL). If a bat tests negative, then the person is not exposed and does not need to go through postexposure prophylaxis (PEP).

Guidelines to follow when capturing a bat to submit for testing include:

- If the bat is presumed dead, always take caution in the case the bat is merely stunned.
- Take care to not crush the skull. A damaged brain may render the specimen unsatisfactory for testing.
- If the bat is alive, guard yourself from any potential bite and place the bat into a hard-sided container.
- Your local vet may be able to assist with euthanasia and shipment for testing if needed.
- If you want to avoid fees associated with veterinarian euthanasia and shipment, you can deliver the live bat to SHL where it will be euthanized and tested at no cost.

Additional specimen submission guidelines for each laboratory are available at:

- Iowa State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory:
vetmed.iastate.edu/vdl/submissions/guidelines/rabies
- State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL):
www.shl.uiowa.edu/kitsquotesforms/rabiescollectioninstructions.pdf

CADE is available 24/7 for consultation regarding potential rabies exposures. Call 515-242-5935 during business hours or 515-323-4360 outside of business hours.

Rabies PEP review – it's never too late

For people who have never been vaccinated against rabies, PEP should include the administration of both human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) and rabies vaccine.

On day zero (the day PEP starts, not the date of exposure), patients receive both HRIG and vaccine. Then, on days 3, 7, and 14 patients receive a dose of vaccine. A fifth dose on day 28 is recommended for immunocompromised individuals, followed by a titer check.

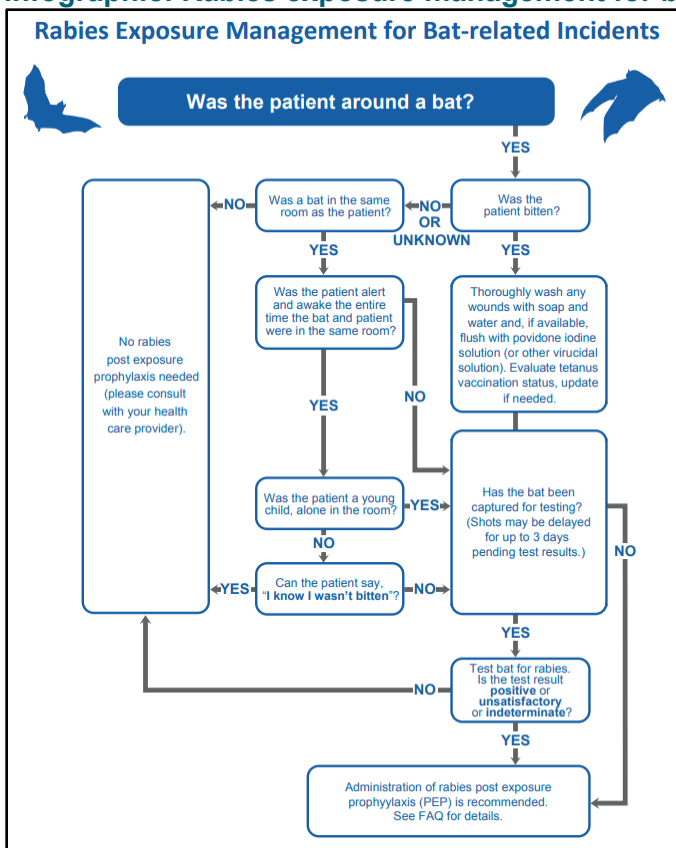
Individuals who received the pre-exposure prophylaxis series or who completed PEP series prior should not receive HRIG as part of PEP and generally only require a dose of vaccine on days zero and 3. No one is considered immune to rabies due to prior vaccination - exposed individuals always need PEP. Review the full guidelines for more detail.

A common misconception heard during rabies consultations is that too much time has passed since exposure to give PEP. The incubation period for rabies in humans is highly variable and can be as long as several years. Patients presenting months or even years following a potential rabies exposure should be handled the same as someone who was just exposed. PEP should generally be started as soon as possible following an exposure unless the animal is being tested or quarantined.

For more rabies information, including links to full CDC guidelines, visit hhs.iowa.gov/center-acute-disease-epidemiology/rabies-information-public-providers-and-veterinarians.

In the news: CDC reports 21 Oropouche cases among travelers returning from Cuba
www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-cdc-reports-21-oropouche-cases-among-travelers-returning-cuba-2024-08-27/

Infographic: Rabies exposure management for bat-related incidents



To view in full size, visit hhs.iowa.gov/media/7794/download?inline.

Have a healthy and happy week!
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
800-362-2736