



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Region IV Public Health
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties
and Cowlitz Tribe

Health Advisory

Please deliver a copy of the accompanying alert to each provider in your organization.

Thank you

Questions regarding this alert may be directed to the office of:

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Clark County Public Health
(360) 397-8412
Please Distribute

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for specific incident for situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Region IV Public Health
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties
and Cowlitz Tribe

HEALTH ADVISORY

July 22, 2011

Dear Clark County Provider,

In February, we informed you of changes in reporting due to the Washington Administrative Code revision. A major change was in reporting animal bites. The old code required all animal bites be reported; this resulted in many unnecessary reports where rabies risk was negligible. The new rule requires that only **suspected rabies exposure** be immediately reported to local health jurisdictions (LHJ). However, we continue to receive animal bite reports that are not required to be reported. This letter provides additional information regarding the new requirements.

To report a suspected rabies exposure, contact us (Clark County Public Health) at 360-397-8182. We are available 24/7 for consultation by calling the public health answering service 1-888-727-6230, outside of regular business hours. We can also facilitate animal testing when deemed necessary.

You should ALWAYS report bites where there is a potential risk for human rabies. These include human exposures to bites from:

- Any rabid-acting mammal
- Bats (known bites, scratches, or possible sleep exposures)
- Wild carnivores (e.g., skunks, foxes, coyotes), and hybrid carnivores (e.g., wolf-dog, coyote-dog, many domestic cat-wild cat hybrids).
 - If the wild carnivore or bat is available for rabies testing, please advise the patient that the animal will be sent for testing prior to starting rabies post exposure prophylaxis (PEP). Public Health will arrange this testing. If the animal is NOT available for testing then rabies PEP should be initiated if the bite was unprovoked or the animal was acting strangely (and for all bat exposures, regardless if was unprovoked).
 - Note: Although raccoon bites occur frequently (often associated with humans feeding these animals), raccoon rabies is not endemic in Washington State. Therefore, we do not recommend post exposure prophylaxis for provoked raccoon bites. If the raccoon appeared ill or bite was unprovoked, contact us.
- Dogs, cats, or ferrets if:
 - Bite occurred in a rabies-endemic country (e.g., Asia, Africa, South America), or
 - Animal was imported from rabies-endemic country in the past 6 months, or
 - Animal had known exposure to a bat or other wild carnivore.

You do not need to report bites where rabies risk is exceptionally low. These include bites from:

- Dogs, cats, or ferrets if:
 - Animal did not exhibit any signs of rabies **AND**
 - Bite was provoked, **AND**
 - There was no known contact with bats or wild carnivores.
- Rodents, opossums, rabbits, squirrels, and domestic livestock (e.g., cattle, horse, sheep) unless there were unusual circumstances.

Dogs, cats, or ferrets that bite a human should be confined for 10 days to observe for signs of rabies. Included with this alert is a "Dear Patient" letter explaining how these observations should be managed. We ask that you provide this letter to any patient treated for dog, cat or ferret bites.

Please report all animal bites from dogs, cats and ferrets to animal control.

- Clark County Animal Control: 360-397-2488 (bites in City of Vancouver, Yacolt, and unincorporated areas) Fax: 360-759-6807
- Battle Ground - (360) 342-5100
- Camas- (360) 834-4151
- Washougal - (360) 835-8701
- La Center - (360) 263-2745
- Ridgefield - (360) 887-3556
- Yacolt (360) 686-3922

An algorithm to assist you in assessing what constitutes a potential rabies exposure has been developed by Washington State Department of Health and is available at, <http://www.doh.wa.gov/notify/other/rabiesalg.pdf>.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'a m', is positioned above the typed name.

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH
Health Officer
Clark County Public Health



proud past, promising future

CLARK COUNTY
WASHINGTON

Public Health
1601 E. Fourth Plain Blvd.
P. O. Box 9825
Vancouver, WA 98666-8825
(360) 397-8000

7/22/2011

Dear Patient,

This letter has important information about rabies due to bites from **dogs, cats, and ferrets**.

Rabies is rare in the United States but almost always deadly without prompt treatment. Dog, cat and ferret bites that occur in Washington State are low risk for rabies in most situations. You are at higher risk for developing rabies from a dog, cat, or ferret bite if any of the following occurred:

- You were bitten while traveling in a foreign country.
- The animal that bit you was brought from another country in the past 6 months.
- The animal that bit you had known contact with a bat or with other wild animals like raccoons, coyotes, foxes, or skunks.
- The animal that bit you appeared ill and was not acting normally.

If any of these above conditions apply to your bite situation, or you have questions, please call Clark County Public Health at 360-397-8182.

Washington law requires that dogs, cats and ferrets must be observed for 10 days after biting someone. If the animal has rabies at the time of the bite, it will get sick and die within the 10 day observation period. Public Health will then test the animal. If the test is positive for rabies, the person bitten or scratched needs to begin rabies vaccinations immediately.

If you are the animal owner, follow these rules for the 10 days of observation:

- Restrict the animal so that it cannot escape.
 - Do not leave the dog, cat, or ferret loose or by itself in the yard.
 - Do not take the dog, cat or ferret off your property
- Do not let the animal have contact with people or with other animals (pets or wild).
- Observe the dog, cat, or ferret daily for signs of illness.
- Do not vaccinate the dog, cat, or ferret for rabies during the 10 days.
- Vaccinate the animal after the 10th day if its rabies shots are not up-to-date.
- Do not sell, destroy or get rid of the animal.
- If dog, cat, or ferret gets sick, acts strangely, or dies within the 10 days of observation, immediately contact your veterinarian and also contact Clark County Public Health at 360-397-8182.

If you are unable to observe your own dog, cat or ferret for the 10 days or if the animal that bit or scratched you does not belong to your family, contact animal control at following numbers:

- Clark County Animal Control: 360-397-2488 (bites in City of Vancouver, Yacolt, and unincorporated areas)
- Battle Ground - (360) 342-5100
- Camas- (360) 834-4151
- Washougal - (360) 835-8701
- La Center - (360) 263-2745
- Ridgefield - (360) 887-3556
- Yacolt (360) 686-3922