

# Rabies

## What is rabies?

- Rabies is a disease caused by a deadly virus that can infect all warm-blooded animals, including humans.
- Prevention is considered the only treatment, since once symptoms occur the disease is always FATAL.

## How is rabies spread?

- Rabies is mainly spread by the saliva of an infected animal. This usually involves a scratch, bite, or exposure of fresh cuts to the saliva or brain tissue from an infected animal.
- In Alabama, raccoons, bats, and fox are the main carriers of rabies.

## What should I do if an animal bites me?

- Immediately scrub the wound with soap and running water for five to ten minutes.
- Go to your family doctor or nearest emergency room for first aid of the wound(s).
- Your doctor will decide if you need treatment or postexposure prophylaxis (PEP), which usually includes human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) and 4 doses of rabies vaccine.
- Call your county animal control with a complete description and location of the animal. If you have to kill the animal, do not damage the head, and do not touch the dead animal with bare hands. For more information about Tissue Sample Collection and Handling, see Rabies Bite Manual on [adph.org/epi](http://adph.org/epi).
- Call your county health department to report the event, so the animal can be tested at the State Lab.

## How do I protect myself?

- Have your veterinarian vaccinate all your animals, like dogs, cats, ferrets, and horses, and keep them up-to-date on their rabies vaccines.
- Do not touch or feed wild or stray animals.
- Do not allow your pets to run free, keep them secure on your property.
- If your animal is attacked by a wild, stray, or unvaccinated animal, avoid potential rabies infected saliva.
  - Wear gloves to check for injuries and wash the wounds with soap and water.
  - Keep your animal separate from people and other animals until you call your vet, animal control, and county health department.

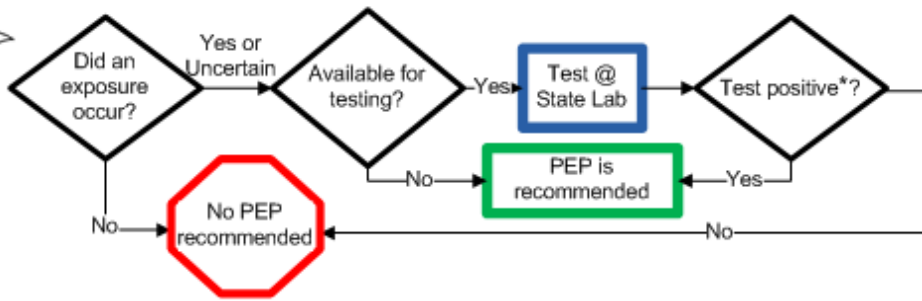
## Where can I find more information?

- Go to or [adph.org/epi](http://adph.org/epi), Rabies or [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) and type Rabies in SEARCH box.

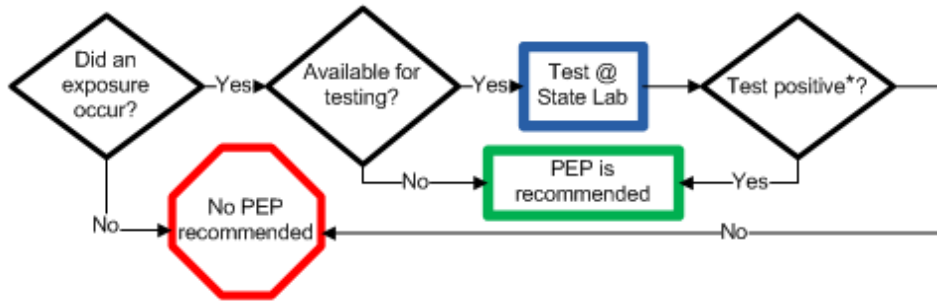




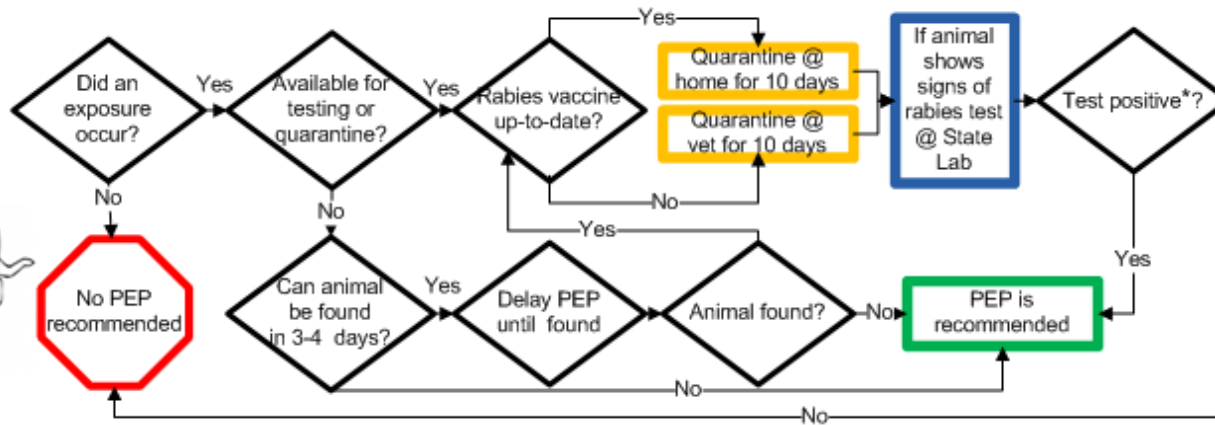
Bat



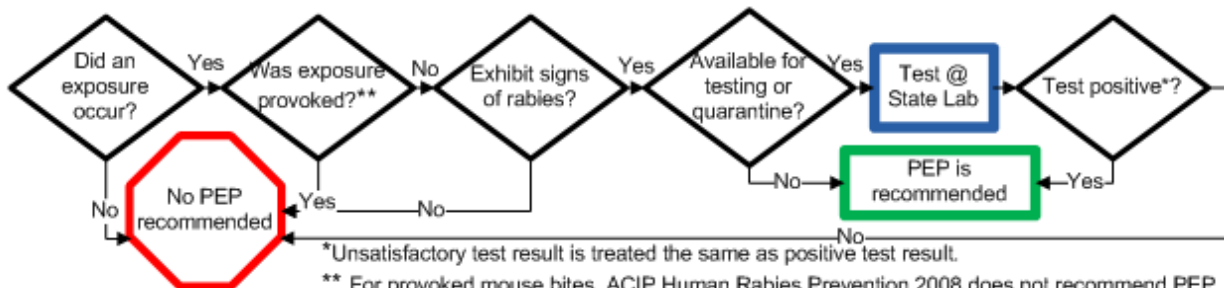
Raccoon and other wild carnivore



Dog  
Cat  
Ferret



Squirrel, rabbit & rodent



\*Unsatisfactory test result is treated the same as positive test result.

\*\* For provoked mouse bites, ACIP Human Rabies Prevention 2008 does not recommend PEP.

## Definitions

**Exposure** is any contact with saliva or brain/nervous tissue through open cuts in the skin, scratches, or mucous membrane (mouth or eyes).

**PEP** is postexposure prophylaxis or treatment, which usually includes HRIG and 4-doses of rabies vaccine.

**Provoked** is an intentional act that causes the animal to react in a hostile manner.

**Quarantine** is separating suspected animal from other animals and people.

**Signs of rabies** include obvious changes in normal behavior, like aggression, attack without reason, foaming at mouth, no interest in food or water, stagger, tired, or paralysis. In wild animals, they may act very tame.

**Uncertain** exposure can occur with bats because they have small teeth and may leave marks that are not easily seen.

For more information, go to [www.adph.org/epi](http://www.adph.org/epi), Rabies to review the Rabies Bite Manual, Alabama Rabies Law, Rabies data, and CDC Rabies links. For questions, please call the Infectious Diseases & Outbreaks Division, Zoonotic Branch at 1-800-338-8374.

For large animals, like cows and horses, please contact Epidemiology Division, Zoonotic Branch, 1-800-338-8374.