COLORADO
Department of Public Health & Environment

Rabies Risk Assessment for Human Exposure to Animals

Dog, cat or ferret bite to human in the United States

This algorithm is to help local health departments and healthcare providers assess the risk of rabies exposure when a dog or cat is not available for 10-day quarantine or testing. Consult CDPHE for bites from dogs or cats outside the United States.

Is the animal available for testing or quarantine?

No

- Attempt to locate the animal and report to animal control. Have the patient call animal control while at the healthcare facility. His/her details will increase chances of locating the animal.
- Educate patient on rarity of dog and cat rabies in Colorado
- Advise patient to wait to hear back from animal control
- Encourage patient to discuss with local health department. Provide local and state health department phone numbers.

When the dog/cat is not located: Public health officials provide risk assessment to the patient and/or health care provider based on a combination of factors:

Most important: Geographic area of the state. For example, the Western Slope is considered low risk, and PEP usually is not recommended unless animal exhibited neurological signs. Stray animals from rural areas in eastern Colorado with known epizootics are considered increased risk.

Known animal vs. stray: For example, animals with collars indicate a level of care that likely includes previous rabies vaccinations and are lower risk. Stray cats routinely seen within the bite victim's neighborhood can be observed from a distance for 10 days to assess health status.

Low risk
Public Health will not encourage vaccination

Increased risk
Public Health will encourage vaccination

High risk
Public Health may assist in coordinating rabies PEP and documenting completion of it.

Yes

Withhold PEP and quarantine dog, cat or ferret for 10 days

If animal remains **healthy**, PEP is not indicated.

If animal **dies** or develops signs of rabies, test brain tissue.

Negative result
No further action needed. PEP **not** indicated

Positive result
Start PEP

colorado.gov/cdphe/rabies
303-692-2700 | 800-866-2759

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