



RABIES IN LEWIS COUNTY

The possibility of rabies in domestic or wild animals is very unlikely in Washington, though it is still important to vaccinate your pets. Raccoons, skunks, and foxes are known to have rabies across the country, at low rates, and are considered rabid unless proven negative by a lab test. In developing countries worldwide, dogs are the principal animal in which rabies is found.

Bat exposures require special consideration as bats are the only known reservoir in Washington State. Most bats are harmless, but approximately 1% of bats in the wild are infected with the rabies virus.

Rabies is almost always deadly once the virus attacks your body, but you can receive preventive treatment if you've been bitten or scratched by a bat or other potentially rabid animal.

Lewis County has had no cases of rabies in nearly 30 years. Each year, however, Lewis County Public Health and Social Services receives calls from residents to 1) assess potential exposure to rabies and 2) ensure treatment for rabies is established for residents that have been determined to be exposed to rabies in Lewis County or elsewhere.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A RABIES EXPOSURE?

If you find a bat in your home, call Lewis County Public Health and Social Services, 360-740-1223, only if there has been potential human exposure. We will determine if there has been a true rabies exposure and if rabies testing is needed.

Do not release or trash the bat if someone has come into contact with the bat until an assessment has been made if the bat needs to be tested for rabies.

What is considered a rabies exposure?

- A bite, scratch, or mucus membrane exposure from a bat or other rabid-acting carnivore
- Finding a bat in the room when waking up
- Finding a bat in the room with an unattended small child, an immobile, intoxicated or mentally incapacitated person, or a pet.
- Touching a bat's fur, wings, blood, feces, or urine is NOT a potential rabies exposure.

If you have been exposed to a bite or scratch from a bat or other rabid-acting carnivore, go to your primary care provider or emergency room for medical attention and post-exposure rabies vaccinations. Your healthcare provider or ER provider should contact the Lewis County Public Health and Social Services if there is suspicion of rabies exposure.

What if my pet is exposed?

- Pet only exposure is not reportable to Lewis County Public Health and Social Services.
- If you believe your pet has been exposed, contact your veterinarian for further assessment and obtain a rabies booster vaccination for your pet, even if your pet is vaccinated.
- If you have the animal that may have rabies, you can pay to have rabies testing done on the animal by calling the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Lab, (509) 335-9696, or the Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Lab, (541)737-3261, for more information.
- If you do not have the animal that may have rabies, confine your pet for 10 days and monitor for rabies symptoms:
 - Lethargy
 - Fever
 - Vomiting
 - Anorexia/loss of appetite
 - Weakness/paralysis
 - Problems swallowing
 - Excessive saliva
 - Foaming at the mouth
 - Biting at imaginary objects
 - Anxious behaviors
 - Aggressive behaviors
 - Disorientation/loss of coordination/staggering hind legs

