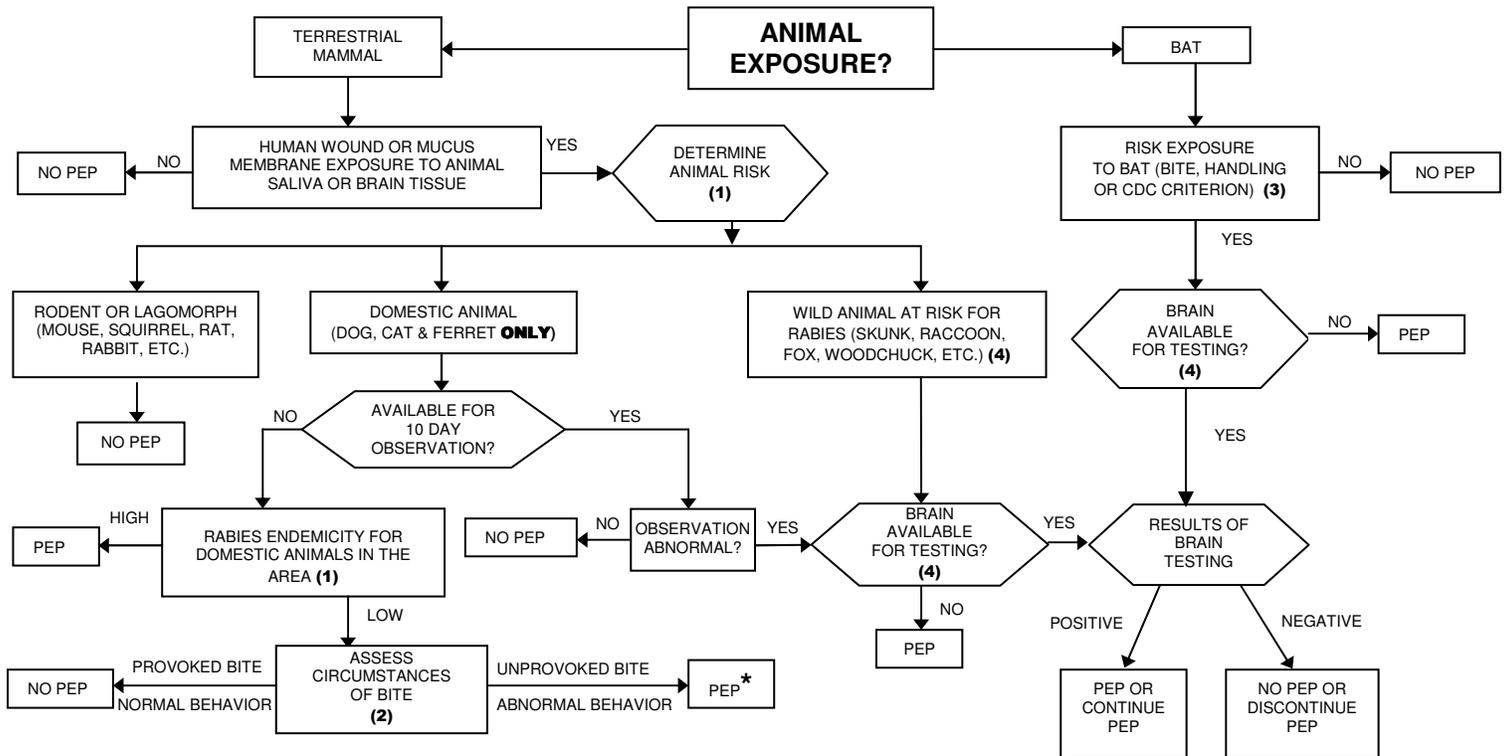


KENT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

DETERMINING THE NEED FOR RABIES POSTEXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP) WITH HUMAN RABIES IMMUNE GLOBULIN (RIG) AND RABIES VACCINE



Rabies risk assessment requires balancing a number of criteria: the species of animal and the endemicity of rabies for that species for the Michigan area, the observed health and behavior of the animal, and the circumstances of the bite.

(1) Animal risk and rabies endemicity: Although all terrestrial mammals can theoretically be infected, in reality only one or two species are significant reservoirs in endemic areas. Bats and skunks were the primary carriers for rabies in Michigan in 1999 and 2000. Bats were the only identified carriers in Kent County. Exposures to raccoons, foxes, and woodchucks are considered risks. Barring very unusual circumstances, rodents and lagomorphs are not considered at-risk species. In questionable or unusual circumstances involving rodent, lagomorph, and livestock bites, consult the health department.

(2) Assessing the circumstances of a bite for domestic animals and other low-risk species: *Provoked exposures* may include attempting to feed an animal, entering an animal's territory, petting or playing with an animal, handling an animal, attempting to break up a fight between animals, having contact with an injured animal, and walking, running or riding a bicycle past an animal. *Unprovoked exposures* are rare and typically require an animal to cross neutral space and attack. The physician should attempt to get the patient to describe the scenario in order to establish the true nature of the circumstances surrounding the biting incident. Do not simply ask if the bite was provoked or unprovoked. * If the domestic animal is not available for observation, but available for testing (e.g., animal is already dead), consideration can be made for submitting the animal for testing as part of assessment process.

(3) Bat exposures: In addition to obvious bites, the CDC suggests that PEP can be considered in cases where there is a reasonable probability that contact with a bat may have occurred (e.g., a sleeping person awakens to find a bat in the same room, an adult witnesses a bat in a room with a previously unattended child, mentally disabled person, or intoxicated individual) and rabies cannot be ruled out by testing of the bat. PEP would not be warranted for other household members.

(4) Rabies Post Exposure Prophylaxis where a high-risk animal is available for Rabies (brain) testing: The severity of the wound, location of the wound, (severe wounds or obvious wounds near the head and neck should be given priority), and the expected interval between the time of the bite and receipt of rabies test results should be considered when making a decision to begin PEP while awaiting test results. If PEP was started and test results are negative, PEP may be discontinued.

References: Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Human Rabies Prevention –United States, 1999: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). MMWR 1999;48(No.RR-1).; Journal of the American Medical Association. Appropriateness of Rabies Postexposure Prophylaxis Treatment for Animal Exposures. August 23/30,2000: 284(8); Michigan Department of Community Health. Guidelines for Animal Bites and Rabies 1999.