

## Management of Animals Exposed to Rabies

Any animal potentially exposed to rabies virus by a wild, carnivorous mammal or a bat that is not available for testing should be regarded as having been exposed to rabies, and should be reported to the Alabama Department of Public Health.

### Dogs, Cats, and Ferrets

- **Unvaccinated** dogs, cats, and ferrets exposed to a known rabid animal are recommended to be euthanized immediately. If the owner is unwilling to have this done, the animal must be placed in strict isolation for 6 months and vaccinated either upon entry to isolation OR one month prior to release. Animals with expired vaccinations need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Strict isolation should be conducted under the authority of the county health department in which the place, manner, and provisions of the confinement are specified. At the first sign of illness or behavioral change in the animal, the county health department should be notified and the animal should be evaluated by a veterinarian. If clinical signs are suggestive of rabies, the animal should be immediately euthanized and tested for rabies.
- **Currently vaccinated** dogs, cats, and ferrets to a known rabid animal should be revaccinated immediately, kept under the owner's control, and observed at home for 45 days for clinical signs of rabies. During the observation period the animal should not be permitted to roam freely and should be restricted to leash walks, if applicable. At the first sign of illness or behavioral change in the animal, the local rabies control agency should be notified and the animal should be evaluated by a veterinarian. If clinical signs are suggestive of rabies, the animal should be immediately euthanized and tested for rabies.

### Horses

*\*The Alabama Department of Public Health should be consulted for all possible rabies exposure in horses.\**

- All species of livestock are susceptible to rabies; horses and cattle are the most frequently infected. Horses exposed to a rabid animal and **currently vaccinated** with a vaccine approved by the USDA or FDA for that species should be revaccinated immediately and observed for 45 days.
- **Unvaccinated** horses should be euthanized immediately. If the animal is not euthanized it should be kept under close observation for 6 months. Any illness in an animal under observation should be reported immediately to the local health department. If signs suggestive of rabies develop, the animal should be euthanized and the head shipped for testing.
- Barrier precautions should be used by persons handling the animal and tissues.
- Multiple rabid animals in a herd or herbivore-to-herbivore transmission are uncommon; therefore, restricting the rest of the herd if a single animal has been exposed to or infected by rabies is usually not necessary.

### Cattle and Sheep

*\*The Alabama Department of Public Health should be consulted for all possible rabies exposure in cattle and sheep.\**

- Cattle and sheep exposed to a rabid animal and **currently vaccinated** with a vaccine approved by the USDA for that species should be revaccinated immediately and observed for 45 days or be slaughtered.
- **Unvaccinated** cattle and sheep should be euthanized immediately. If the animal is not euthanized it should be kept under close observation for 6 months. Any illness in an animal under observation should be reported immediately to the local health department. If signs suggestive of rabies develop, the animal should be euthanized.
- If an exposed animal is to be slaughtered for consumption, it should be done immediately after exposure. Handling and consumption of tissues from exposed animals may carry a risk for rabies transmission. Risk factors depend in part on the site(s) of exposure, amount of virus present, severity of wounds, and whether sufficient contaminated tissue has been excised. Federal regulation prohibits the slaughter of animals known to be exposed to a known positive rabid animal. Historically, federal guidelines for meat inspectors required that any animal known to have been exposed to rabies within 8 months be rejected for slaughter. USDA Food and Inspection Service meat inspectors should be notified if such exposures occur in food animals prior to slaughter.
- If the animal is privately slaughtered, barrier precautions should be used by persons handling the animal and tissues, and all tissues should be cooked thoroughly. If the animal is slaughtered within 7 days of being exposed and provided that tissues in the exposed areas are discarded, the meat can be consumed without risk. Proper cooking and pasteurizations is effective in killing the rabies virus. Drinking pasteurized milk from an exposed animal is not considered a human exposure
- Rabies virus may be widely distributed in tissues of infected animals. Tissues and products from a rabid animal should not be used for human or animal consumption. However, pasteurization temperatures will inactivate rabies virus; therefore, drinking pasteurized milk or eating thoroughly cooked animal products does not constitute a rabies exposure.
- Multiple rabid animals in a herd or herbivore-to-herbivore transmission are uncommon; therefore, restricting the rest of the herd if a single animal has been exposed to or infected by rabies is usually not necessary.

#### **Other Animals**

- Other animals bitten by a rabid animal should be euthanized immediately. Animals maintained in USDA-licensed research facilities or accredited zoological parks should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Consultations can be provided by the Zoonosis Branch, Epidemiology Division, Alabama Department of Public Health.