

Date: July 22, 2021

To: South Zone Physicians

From: Medical Officers of Health – South Zone

RE: Public Health Reporting of Animal Exposures

As Alberta's COVID-19 activity continues to fall, individuals are looking for outdoor activities increasing the likelihood of human-animal interactions.

Rabies Risk assessment for animal exposures require collaboration between various health care providers, including Public Health. Rabies exposure from a domestic pet such as dogs and cats, and other rodents is extremely minimal. Bats are the predominant species that may carry rabies virus in Alberta. Public Health will continue focusing on rabies risk assessment for higher risk animal exposures only.

Negligible risk criteria for rabies exposure include exposure via:

- Unbroken skin and in cases where animal saliva did NOT contact open wounds or mucosal membranes.
- Police dog or other service animal.
- Healthy companion animal of family, friend, relative or neighbour.
- Exposures from rodents, fish, reptiles or birds.

Actions for physicians to assist Public Health prioritize high rabies risk animal exposures:

- 1) Utilize the **Animal Exposure Investigation Report Form** and the **Animal Exposure Assessment Algorithm**.
- 2) Assess for tetanus immunization as per usual, offer tetanus containing vaccine as per Immunization guidelines, and timely report the immunization to Public Health.
- 3) Complete the Animal Exposure Investigation Report Form
 - a. Negligible Risk - check the negligible risk box on the form and share [Patient Care Sheet](#) with patients who have had negligible rabies risk animal exposures.
 - b. Higher Risk Exposures – check the High Risk box on the form.
- 4) Fax completed Animal Exposure Investigation Form to Environmental Public Health (1-403-592-4144).
- 5) Remind patients to ensure their domestic pets are up-to-date with their rabies immunizations and avoid any interaction or provocation with wild animals.

Please communicate this process, including where to find the Animal Exposure Investigation Form, with all staff, and ensure that it is sent to Public Health in a timely fashion.