

# STATE OF COLORADO

Bill Ritter, Jr., Governor  
James B. Martin, Executive Director

Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

4300 Cherry Creek Dr. S.      Laboratory Services Division  
Denver, Colorado 80246-1530    8100 Lowry Blvd.  
Phone (303) 692-2000          Denver, Colorado 80230-6928  
TDD Line (303) 691-7700        (303) 692-3090  
Located in Glendale, Colorado  
<http://www.cdph.state.co.us>



Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment

## **RABIES PREVENTION AND CONTROL POLICY MANAGEMENT OF DOMESTIC DOGS, CATS AND FERRETS INVOLVED IN HUMAN BITES**

Animal bites, especially dog and cat bites, are a common and serious public health problem. Bites can result in psychological trauma, transmission of disease including rabies, localized infection of the bite wound, permanent physical disfigurement and death. This document outlines the required management of a dog (*Canis familiaris*), cat (*Felix domesticus*) or domestic ferret (*Mustela putorius*) that has bitten a human. These requirements are based on the Compendium of Animal Rabies Control and Prevention, prepared annually by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians and in Human Rabies Prevention--United States, 2008, published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

### **Statutory Authority / Reporting Requirements**

Authority for the enforcement of this policy is provided under the Colorado Rabies Control Statutes, 25-4-601 et. seq. C.R.S. 1973, as amended. This law includes provisions for the confinement of biting or suspected rabid animals, enactment of local vaccination and running-at-large ordinances, emergency powers of the department, duty of law enforcement agencies to assist and penalties for violations.

In addition, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) statute, 25-1-122 C.R.S. outlines reporting requirements and provides access to medical records for certain diseases and medical conditions including rabies and mammal bites. The associated Rules and Regulations Pertaining to Epidemic and Communicable Disease Control (6 CCR-1009-1) specifically define the manner in which such reports are to be made. Specifically, these laws require anyone having knowledge of a person bitten by a dog, cat, or other mammal to report that fact to the local health department or county health officer. The health department or their representative, usually the local animal control agency, can then conduct the necessary investigation. For dogs, cats, bats, skunks and other wild carnivores such report must be made within 24 hours. This report should include the name, age, sex and location of the person bitten and, if known, the location of the biting animal.

### **Mandatory Post-Bite Quarantine**

Domestic dogs, cats or ferrets involved in a human bite must be quarantined for a 10 day observation period to eliminate the risk of rabies virus transmission. This period was determined from studies that demonstrated rabies virus begins to appear in the animal's saliva as symptoms of rabies start to appear. Animals that remain alive and healthy 10 days post-bite would not have been shedding rabies virus in their saliva, and therefore not have been infectious, when they bit.

**The 10-day observation period applies ONLY to domestic dogs, cats and that ferrets have bitten a human.**

Rabies vaccination status should be verified, either by a valid vaccination certificate or contacting the animal's veterinarian. This information can be provided to the bite victim and their physician to reduce concerns that the animal could be rabid. Due to the theoretical risk of rabies vaccine inhibiting the clinical onset of rabies, rabies vaccination should be deferred until completion of the observation period. The 10-day quarantine is required regardless of the animal's vaccination status.

Depending on the bite circumstances and local animal control policies, a biting animal may be confined at the local animal shelter, a private kennel, veterinary clinic or the owner's home. For home quarantine the animal should remain confined to the owner's property during the observation period. A veterinary examination must be arranged immediately if the animal becomes ill. If a veterinarian believes the animal is suffering from neurological symptoms consistent with rabies or the animal dies for any reason during the observation period rabies testing is required. The animal owner is responsible for all costs related to quarantine and testing.

### **Exceptions to Quarantine Period**

In some situations the 10-day quarantine may not be feasible. In these cases, euthanasia and rabies testing of a biting dog, cat or ferret would be required. This could include 1) the owner requests the animal be immediately euthanized and tested; 2) the animal is exhibiting signs and symptoms of a neurological illness consistent with rabies; 3) the animal is injured or terminally ill and would not survive or it would be inhumane to keep it alive for 10 days; 4) the animal is feral, unmanageable and can not be safely confined. The animal owner is responsible for all costs related to testing, including euthanasia, head removal, shipping and laboratory charges.

### **Bites from Other Animal Species**

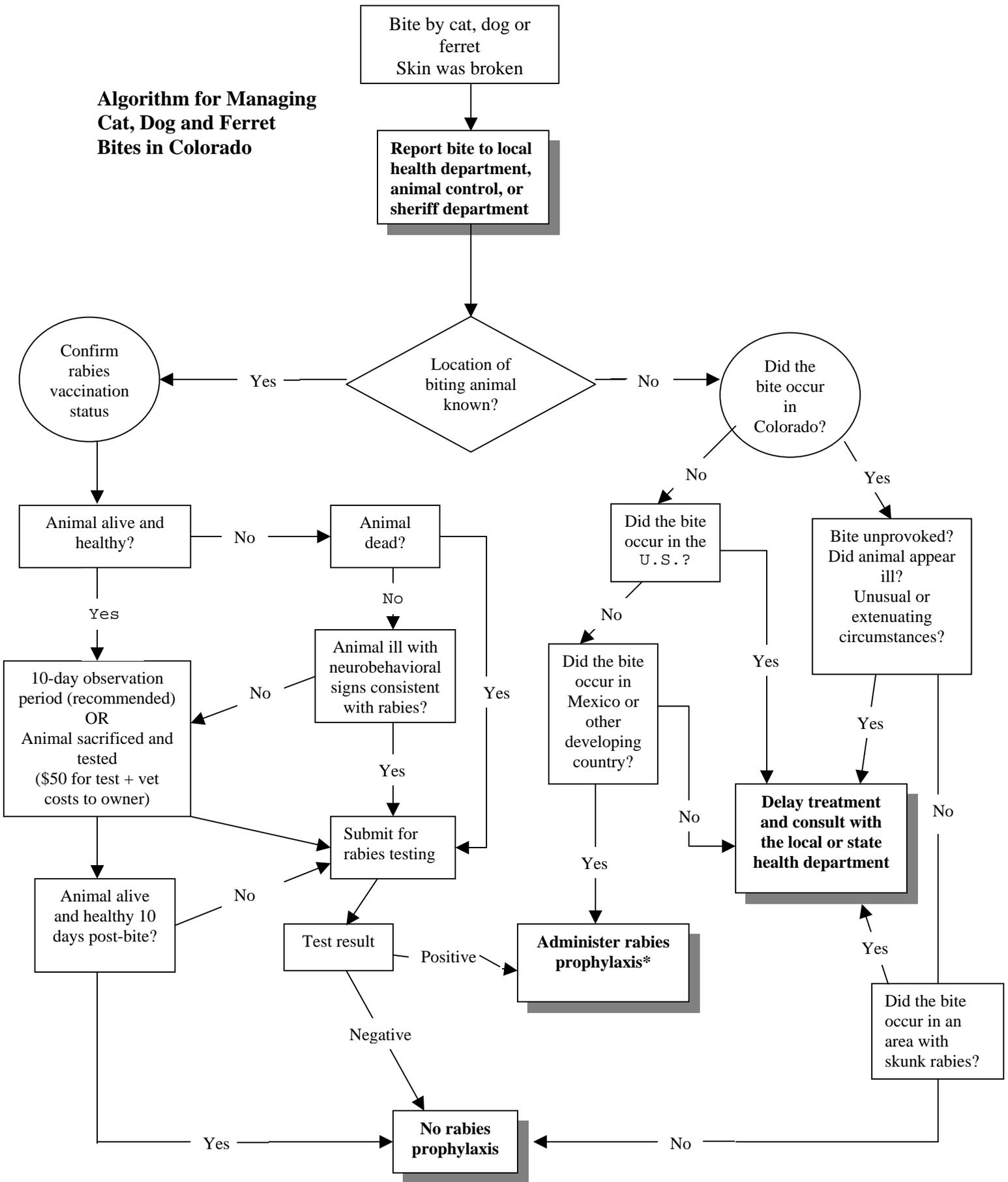
**The 10-day observation period applies ONLY to domestic dogs, cats and that ferrets have bitten a human.** It does not apply to any animal exposed to rabies such as pets attacked by a wild animal or found with a bat. Pet animals or livestock potentially exposed to known or suspected rabid animal must be immediately reported to CDPHE.

Bites of rodents, lagomorphs (rabbits and hares), birds and reptiles are not a rabies risk and do not require quarantine or rabies testing. Human bites involving other domestic or wild mammals are evaluated on a case-by-case basis with subsequent recommendations based on the species, circumstances of the bite, incidence of rabies in the area and availability of the biting animal. A separate CDPHE policy exists for the management of bites involving wolf/dog hybrids.

### **Consultation**

The CDPHE is available for consultation on animal bites, rabies exposures, testing and post-exposure rabies prophylaxis on a 24-hour basis by calling 303-692-2700 (regular business hours) or 303-370-9395 (after-hours, weekend or holiday emergencies).

# Algorithm for Managing Cat, Dog and Ferret Bites in Colorado



\*Although not required, the state health department requests reports of persons given rabies prophylaxis