

Rabies and Animal Exposure Reporting Requirements

Attention: Physicians, Family Health Teams, Ontario Health Teams, Community Health Centres, Nurse Practitioners, Emergency Departments, Urgent Care/Walk-in Clinics

Date: May 14, 2026

Under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA), physicians and other health-care providers are required to report animal exposures that may pose a risk of rabies transmission. Ontario Regulation 557, Section 2(1) requires:

A physician ... or any other person who has information concerning either or both of the following shall, as soon as possible, notify the Medical Officer of Health and provide the Medical Officer of Health with the information, including the name and contact information of the exposed person, for:

1. Any bite from a mammal.
2. Any contact with a mammal that could potentially transmit rabies to a person. (O. Reg. 501/17, s. 1)

Rabies risk in Simcoe Muskoka remains low, however, the virus continues to circulate at a low level in the local bat population, with four positive bats identified last year. Because rabies can be introduced into the area at any time, all mammal bites and scratches should be considered potential exposures and reported to the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) for assessment. Local rabies data can now be accessed on our HealthStats webpage at: [Insect and Animal Surveillance](#).

Timely reporting allows for prompt public health investigation, supports optimal patient care, and often avoids the need for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). Of 2,077 bite reports investigated last year, only 354 required completion of a rabies PEP series.

Management of Patients Presenting with Animal Exposures

1. Reporting

Please complete and submit the [Rabies and Animal Exposure Incident Report Form](#) and fax it to the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) **Rabies Fax line** at 705-725-8132.

Higher risk exposures, such as facial, neck, head and hand bites from mammals and direct contact with bats or wild terrestrial animals (e.g., raccoons, skunks or foxes), should also be verbally reported:

- Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.:
705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 ext. 8811

View all Public Health Alert bulletins at the Health Professionals Portal
www.smdhu.org/HealthProfessionals



Subscribe to urgent health email communications (E.g. Public Health Alert) by registering at www.smdhu.org/PHAlert

- After hours, weekends, and holidays:
1-888-225-7851

2. Bat and Wildlife Exposures

Confirm whether the involved animal is available for testing and provide its status and location to SMDHU. When safe, the animal should be captured or retrieved for rabies testing, which can help prevent unnecessary prophylaxis. Bats should never be handled directly; local animal control agencies or private wildlife control companies should be used whenever possible. SMDHU can assist with coordination of testing.

Unless the exposure involves the head, neck, or hands, rabies PEP may be safely delayed for up to 48 hours, while waiting for test results. Rabies PEP can be initiated and then discontinued if the animal subsequently tests negative. Results are typically available within 48 hours.

Effective June 1, 2026, Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) will no longer be providing testing for non-exposures (bats), and Category 1 terrestrial animal exposures (e.g., feeding, touching, or contact with intact skin).

3. Domestic Animal Exposures

For domestic animals (dogs and cats) and livestock, SMDHU will implement an observation period, regardless of the rabies vaccination status of the animal, to confirm it was not infectious at the time of the incident. The animal must stay with an approved care giver during this time and may not be relocated without SMDHU approval.

4. Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)

When determining the need for post exposure rabies immunization, the current [Ministry of Health Management of Potential Rabies Exposures Guideline, 2020](#) and [Rabies vaccine: Canadian Immunization Guide](#) is recommended as a resource:

Post-exposure prophylaxis of immunocompetent persons who have not been previously immunized with rabies vaccine consists of: local wound treatment; rabies immunoglobulin (20 IU/kg body weight) given on day 0 with as much as possible infiltrated into and around the wound; and four 1.0 mL IM doses of rabies vaccine given on days 0, 3, 7 and 14.

Post-exposure prophylaxis of immunocompromised persons or who are taking antimalarial drugs (and who have not been previously immunized with rabies vaccine): In those who have not previously been immunized, an additional fifth dose of vaccine should be given on day 28.

Post-exposure prophylaxis of persons previously appropriately immunized with rabies vaccine consists of: local wound treatment and two 1.0 mL IM doses of rabies vaccine given on days 0 and 3. Rabies immunoglobulin should not be given to persons who have previously received appropriate rabies vaccinations.

To access **rabies vaccine and immunoglobulin**, please contact the Rabies Coordinator at ext. **8894** or after hours at **1-888-225-7851**.

Additional Resources

SMDHU offers consultation to physicians through its Rabies Program Coordinator and resources for health professionals can be found under the Environmental Health tab on our website:

- [Rabies PEP Dose Schedule](#) (dose and schedule of vaccine and immune globulin)
- [Recommendations for Administration of Rabies PEP](#) (administration of the Rabies Vaccine and Immunoglobulin, such as needle size and injection location)
- [Management of Potential Rabies Exposures Guideline, 2020](#)
- [Canadian Immunization Guide](#)
- [PHO: How to Administer Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis](#)
- [Rabies and Animal Exposure Incident Report Form](#)
- [Management of patients with suspected rabies exposure, 2017](#)

To speak with a public health inspector about rabies contact the Environmental Health line at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 ext. 8811. For questions about **rabies vaccination or to request rabies vaccine and immunoglobulin** contact our Rabies Coordinator at ext. 8894, or after hours at 1-888-225-7851.