

Changes to Animal Testing for Rabies Prevention & Management

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics,
Family Health Teams, Nurse Practitioners

Date: April 3, 2014

Effective April 1, 2014, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency will no longer collect, process or transport animal specimens for rabies testing. An alternate solution is being actively developed by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC).

The contingency plan, until the new system is approved and implemented, is the administration of rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), based on an appropriate risk assessment, in all cases where rabies in an animal cannot be ruled out. Until Ontario has restored its full rabies specimen management capacity, this is the only means of ensuring that the risk of rabies transmission to humans is appropriately managed.

Further communication will be provided once the MOHLTC has finalized the new process for the submission and transportation of animal specimens for rabies testing.

Health unit staff will continue to investigate and assess human exposure to animals suspected of having rabies. Response may include the confinement and isolation of dogs, cats or ferrets for a 10 day observation period. As a reminder, the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Communicable Disease – General (Regulation 557, Section 2 (1))* states that: *A physician, veterinarian, police officer or any other person who has information concerning any animal bite or other animal contact that may result in rabies in persons shall, as soon as possible, notify the medical officer of health and provide the medical officer of health with the information.*

The health unit's process for receiving requests for PEP remains the same. Please contact the Rabies Coordinator during office hours at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 at ext. 7560. After hours, please call 1-888-225-7851.