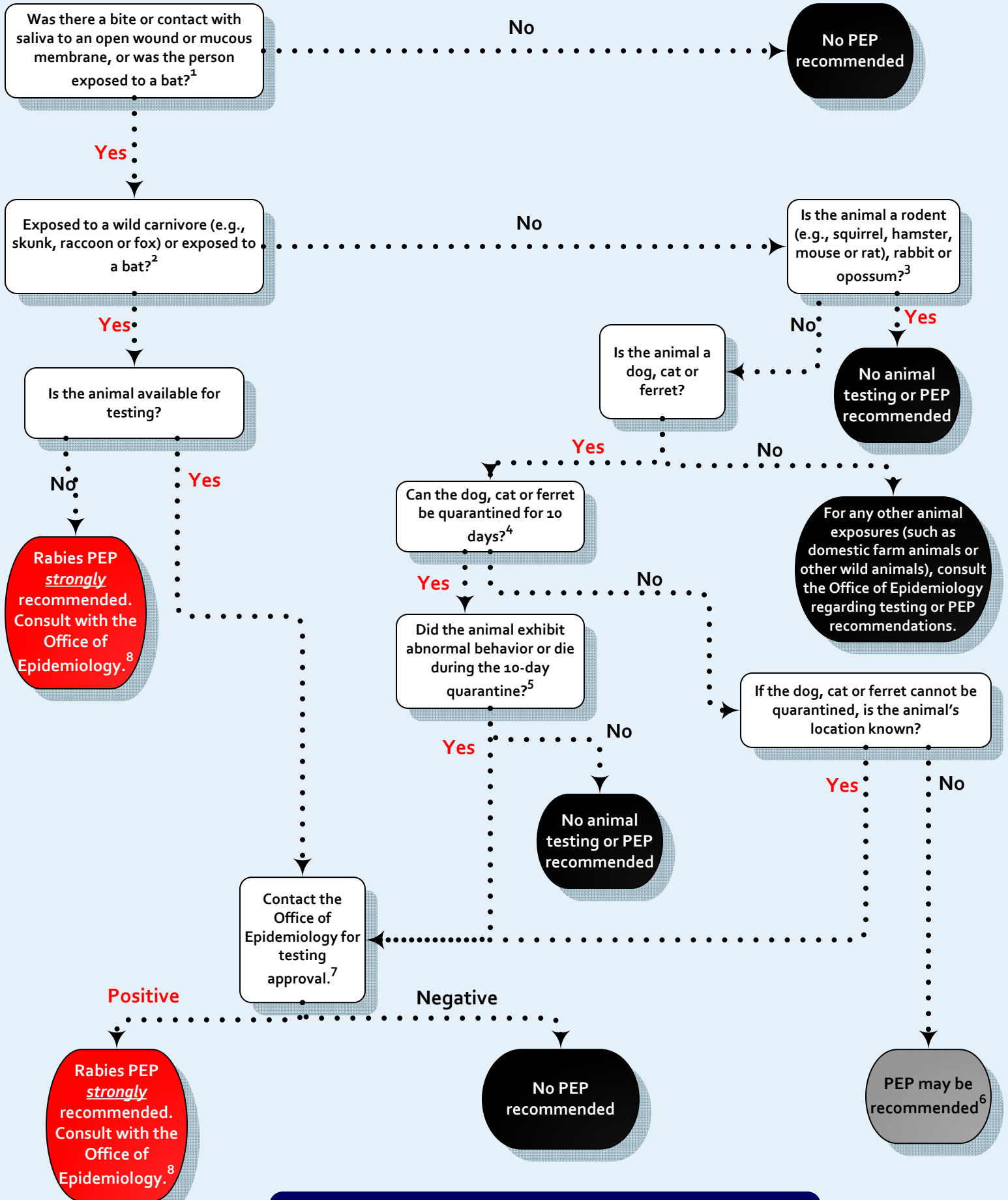


Human Rabies Postexposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and Animal Testing Assessment Algorithm



Refer to the Rabies Algorithm Information section

1. Was there a bite or contact with saliva to an open wound or mucous membrane, or was the person exposed to a bat?

Animal bites and exposures are not a reportable condition in Mississippi, however confirmed or suspected rabies in humans and animals is a Class 1 reportable condition. An **Animal Bite/Exposure Questionnaire** should be completed for every reported exposure. Call the MSDH Office of Epidemiology at 601-576-7725 (601-576-7400 after hours, weekends and holidays) with questions regarding exposure risk, animal testing and PEP recommendations.

2. Exposed to a wild carnivore (e.g., skunk, raccoon or fox) or exposed to a bat?

Wild carnivore and bat exposures pose the highest risk for human rabies. An obvious bite, scratch, or mucous membrane contact from a bat should be considered a high risk contact. Since the transmission of rabies virus can also occur from minor, seemingly unimportant contact with or through unrecognized bites from bats, any handling of or contact with a bat may be associated with a risk of exposure. Also, when a person is awakened by a bat landing on them or a bat is found in the room of an unattended child, mentally disabled person, or intoxicated person, potential exposure should be considered to have occurred. Therefore, every effort should be made to test the bat involved in the potential exposure incident.

3. Is the animal a rodent (e.g., squirrel, hamster, mouse or rat), rabbit or opossum?

Small mammals such as those listed above are almost never found to be infected with rabies and have not been known to cause rabies among humans in the United States. PEP and animal testing are not recommended.

4. Can the dog, cat or ferret be quarantined for 10 days?

A 10 day confinement and observation period (quarantine) of any **healthy** dog, cat or ferret is preferred to euthanasia. Please co-ordinate with the District Health Officer, and notify the Office of Epidemiology when a dog, cat or ferret is quarantined. **10 day quarantine is never appropriate or recommended for any animals other than dogs, cats or ferrets.**

5. Did the animal exhibit abnormal behavior or die during the 10 day quarantine?

The health status of the quarantined animal should be visually verified prior to the end of the confinement period and again at the end of the confinement period. If the animal dies or exhibits any abnormal behavior during the quarantine period, notify the MSDH Office of Epidemiology. Rabies testing of the animal may be recommended.

6. PEP may be recommended.

When the dog, cat or ferret's location is unknown, recommendations for PEP will be based on reported animal behavior, the nature of the exposure (provoked vs. unprovoked), and sometimes on the geographic location of the incident. Most dog and cat bites are provoked. Examples of provoked attacks include: attempting to feed an animal, contact with an injured animal, petting or playing with an animal or handling the animal, attempting to break up a fight, or running or walking past an animal. **Ultimately the decision for PEP lies with the exposed individual and their healthcare provider. MSDH functions in an advisory role only, providing guidance to the individual, a healthcare provider or a hospital emergency department.**

7. Consult with the Office of Epidemiology for testing approval.

Office of Epidemiology approval is required prior to the submission of specimens to the Mississippi Public Health Laboratory for rabies testing.

8. Rabies PEP *strongly* recommended. Consult with the Office of Epidemiology.

High risk exposures to wild carnivores and bats are regarded as rabies exposure unless the animal is proven negative by laboratory test. PEP should be strongly recommended in this circumstance and or when there is exposure to a positive animal. **Ultimately the decision for PEP lies with the exposed individual and their healthcare provider. MSDH functions in an advisory role only, providing guidance to the individual, a healthcare provider or a hospital emergency department.**