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Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: Health Care Providers, City/County Health Organizations, Animal Health, State Offices, New England States, New England Poison Control

From: Dr. Isaac Benowitz, State Epidemiologist

Subject: Increased Turnaround Times for Animal Rabies Testing at HETL

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Increased Turnaround Times for Animal Rabies Testing at HETL

Summary

The purpose of this health advisory is to alert clinicians and professionals who work with animals that could be rabid that, effective November 27, 2023:

- 1) Turnaround times for animal rabies testing at the Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) may take up to three business days, and
- 2) HETL will no longer be accepting live animal submissions.

Individuals submitting animals to HETL for rabies testing should expect turnaround times of up to **three** days to receive test results. Health care providers seeing patients that are exposed to rabid or potentially rabid animals should account for these testing delays when making clinical decisions about rabies treatment (post-exposure prophylaxis). Only the heads of suspected rabid animals may be submitted, and **bats must be euthanized before they arrive at HETL**. People can continue to submit euthanized animals for rabies testing to HETL at 221 State Street in Augusta, ME.

Recommendations for Health Care Providers

Rabies exposure is a medical urgency, but not an emergency. Clinical decisions should not be delayed. Refer to the Health Advisory [Elevated Animal Rabies Activity in Maine](#) (June 8, 2023) for additional clinical information about symptoms, testing, recommendations for health care providers, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), treatment precautions, contraindications, considerations, and reporting. Full rabies management and control guidance is available in the [Maine Rabies Management Guidelines](#).

Additional information:

- Maine CDC rabies website: www.maine.gov/dhhs/rabies
- HETL rabies website: www.maine.gov/dhhs/rabies/lab
- Maine CDC Disease Reporting and Consultation Line: **1-800-821-5821** (available 24/7)