

HZI WILD BAT PROTOCOL

Published 1/10/2017

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Many species of native bats live and migrate through the Houston Zoo. These animals play an important role in our environment and we want to assure a healthy relationship between them and our human inhabitants. Bats eat mosquitoes and other insect pests that can annoy or cause disease in people, animals, and even the zoo's plant collection. However, they also can carry and spread diseases; the most important of which is rabies. Rabies is almost universally fatal and there are strict laws and firm guidelines with respect to this disease to assure human health.

It is common to see bats flying in the Zoo at night. They are especially common near dusk and are seen feeding in lighted areas, attracted by the insects which are attracted to the light. Bats commonly roost in buildings and vegetation throughout the Zoo. They may be encountered while staff is working (trimming trees, maintenance of buildings, etc.) and might fly out when disturbed. These are "normal" bats that we happen to encounter because we share their space.

Bats may also be found in public areas during the day. Babies and ill individuals may fall out of a roosting colony anywhere in the Zoo. If a bat is found by itself, out in broad daylight it is an indication of a potential health problem. These bats present a potential risk to our guests and our animal collection and should be reported and removed as soon as they are discovered. The following instructions are to serve as guidelines to Zoo employees who encounter wild bats to assure a healthy Zoo for all.

DEAD BAT FOUND

Dead bat with no direct human contact:

- If a dead bat is encountered, use a glove, plastic bag, paper towel, or even a drinking cup (may be found in a nearby trash can) to pick up the bat without touching it with your bare hands. Place the bat into the nearest trash receptacle. There is no need to call for assistance or to report it afterwards.

Dead bat with potential guest contact/exposure (such as children playing with it):

- Contact the Zoo Hospital *and*
- Collect contact information from anyone who may have touched the bat including: name, address, and phone number(s), *and*
- Contact Zoo Rangers to fill out an incident report.

LIVE BAT FOUND

Live bat in public area:

- Keep guests away from bat
- Notify veterinary hospital to request assistance. If vet staff is not available, call the Animal Care Duty Manager.
- Ask if any human exposure may have occurred. If so, collect contact information and

- Contact Zoo Rangers to fill out incident report.
- Bats MUST be taken to Zoo hospital and will be kept in the Necropsy room.
 - Healthy bats with **no** human exposure will be released in the evening
 - Abnormal bats, or any bat with human exposure will be euthanized.
- If after hours and no assistance is available, collect bat without directly touching it. Use gloves, drinking cup, plastic bag, or other container to scoop the bat into a secure container. Take the bat in the container to the Necropsy Room at the Veterinary Hospital. Place container in Rubbermaid container near the door, to the left as you enter the room and seal top. There is enough air in the box to maintain a live bat without additional ventilation.
 - Be sure to leave information about any potential human contacts on the container with the bat.
 - Call and advise someone on the veterinary staff of the presence of the bat (you may leave a message including your name and phone number, but keep calling until you actually speak with someone).

AFTER HOURS CALL LIST (CALL IN ORDER LISTED)

1. Joe Flanagan (713) 204-0545 cell, (281) 485-1389 Home
2. Lisa Marie Avendano (713) 852-7214
3. Maryanne Tocidlowski (281) 770-7619
4. Christine Molter (262) 909-6895
5. Judilee Marrow (217) 714-3164
6. Michele Ozuna (832) 754-9845
7. Angelina Fontenot (512) 922-1778

VETERINARY STAFF BAT PROCESSING INSTRUCTIONS

- Dead bat, no human contact: Discard
- Live, healthy bat, no human exposure: take outside at the end of the day and place in sheltered area on side of tree or building. Let it fly if/when it wants to
- Human exposure:
 - Euthanize bat with euthanasia solution, or CO₂/thoracotomy.
 - Fill out submission form and submit entire bat to:

**City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services
2250 Holcombe Blvd.
Houston, TX 77030
832-393-3917**

Specimens are routinely accepted between the hours of 8am – 5pm Monday through Friday. General questions regarding specimens, test/result status, or submission requirements can be directed to the Rabies Laboratory at 832-393-3917. Rabies submission forms can be found online at www.houstontx.gov by typing rabies submission form in the search box, or by copying and pasting the following link into your web browser.

www.houstontx.gov/health/Lab/Rabies_Fillable_Form.pdf

The Zoo does not accept bats from outside the Zoo. Members of the public who present bats at the Zoo should be directed to the City’s Department of Health and Human Services which is located just south of the West Zoo Gate.

RABIES LABORATORY INFORMATION

Houston Department of Health and Human Services Rabies Laboratory

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) laboratory is the primary Rabies testing facility for Houston and several of its surrounding counties. Rabies specimens are accepted at the HDHHS main laboratory located at:

**2250 Holcombe Blvd.
Houston, TX 77030**



Specimens are routinely accepted between the hours of 8am – 5pm Monday through Friday. General questions regarding specimens, test/result status, or submission requirements can be directed to the Rabies laboratory at 832-393-3917. Rabies submission forms can be found online at www.houstontx.gov by typing rabies submission form in the search box, or by copying and pasting the following link into your web browser.

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General:

- The laboratory must examine a complete cross section of the brain stem and either the cerebellum or hippocampus to be confident that adequate samples have been tested. If the animal head has been compromised due to trauma or decomposition, the laboratory may not be able to generate a valid result.
- Specimens shipped by bus are routinely picked up twice a day Monday through Friday.
- Specimens shipped by the various overnight services (Federal Express, UPS, etc.) are accepted by the laboratory in the same manner as specimens delivered by individuals. Please note, however, that these delivery services will not deliver the packages to the City of Houston Laboratory on weekends and holidays.

Acceptance criteria:

- Specimens should be kept cold with cold packs and packaged with absorbent material. If ice must be used, please double bag it in sturdy plastic bags. Also keep current weather conditions in mind when packing the specimen and provide enough cold packs to keep the specimens cold for at least 48 hours. The specimens should not be frozen
- Submission request slips should be packaged in a waterproof bag

Fee for Rabies testing is as follows:**Prioritization of Specimens:**

- The Rabies Section of the HDHHS laboratory will assess the urgency of test requests via the laboratory established case priority and/or approval by HDHHS epidemiology department

Priority 1* – Known Human Bite

Priority 2** – Known Human Exposure or Bat found inside residence

Priority 3 – Pet Exposure

Priority 4 – Other

- All Priority 1 specimens will be tested in-house within 24 hours of arrival of normal business operation
- Priority 2 specimens will be tested within 48 hours of arrival unless otherwise indicated by a medical professional
- Priority levels 3 and 4 will be tested within 72 hours of arrival to the laboratory
- Decomposed and destroyed specimens are not tested and are reported as decomposed or destroyed.
- Each specimen should be accompanied by an HDHHS request for Rabies Testing form.

- The HDHHS Rabies laboratory recognizes all City of Houston approved holidays and does not routinely operate on said holidays.

Please Note: Approximately two percent of specimens appear suspicious on primary testing and cannot be conclusively reported positive or negative. These specimens must be repeated. This will delay reports on these specimens until 5:00 p.m. on specimens normally reported by noon or until the next morning on specimens normally reported by 5:00 p.m.

Emergency Testing of Rabies Specimens

The HDHHS Rabies laboratory has provisions in place to accommodate needs for “emergency testing” Emergency tests on known human bite cases will be performed at the request of medical professionals, veterinarians, and epidemiologists upon approval by the Bureau Chief and/or Virology supervisor

The requesting agency should contact the Bureau Chief or the Virology Supervisor

Bureau Chief of Laboratory Services: Vern.juchau@houstontx.gov

Virology Supervisor: Cynthia.turner@houstontx.gov

Emergency tests will be performed within 8 hours of arrival when advised by a medical professional or Epidemiologist

Please Note: In the event that specimens are sent to the State Health Department please see contact information below.

DSHS:

Texas Department of State Health Services

Laboratory Services Section

1100 W. 49th Street, MC-1947

Austin, TX 78756-3199

ATTN: Letha Zuckero; Rabies Identification Team

(512) 776-7595

BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE, CATEGORY B

REFRIGERATE ON ARRIVAL

- Attach return address label to the top of the sealed outer container/cardboard box. (*The return address label **must** include the name, address, and telephone number of a person **knowledgeable about the shipment of the rabies specimen.***) The package is ready to ship.
- Call the toll-free Rabies Hotline at 1-800-252-8163 to alert the DSHS Laboratory Services Section of the expected arrival time and to provide any other pertinent information regarding the shipment. **This is required by state law.**

Special Instructions:

Provide return postage, if return of the shipping container is desired.

For questions concerning testing of the specimen, call Letha Zuckero at 1-888 963-7111 x7595 or (512) 776-7595

http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/lab/rab_testing

