

UQ VETS Standard Operating Procedure  
School of Veterinary Science  
University of Queensland

<b>Document Title</b>	<b>Domestic pets contact with Bats (Lyssa Virus)</b>	
<b>Organisational Unit</b>	<b>VTH</b>	
<b>Version</b>	4	
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<b>VTH Plan Alignment</b>	Focus	Internal processes

**Purpose:**

To inform staff of the admission procedure and process for the care of pets that have been in contact with wildlife, specifically bats and required processes for such incidences of bat to human and bat to animal interactions.

**Steps to follow if a client presents with a pet that has been in contact with a bat**

- Reception Staff are asked to contact Dr Bob Doneley and in absence of Dr Doneley, contact Dr Anne Covill.

**Background facts:**

- A preliminary study conducted at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) in which dogs and cats were experimentally infected with ABLV was inconclusive.
- Consequently, any bat-animal (including pets) interaction is potentially serious as these animals are interacting with the sub-population of bats where there is the greatest likelihood of finding ABLV.
- Reports are regularly received by Biosecurity Queensland of domestic pets, particularly dogs or cats, coming into close physical contact with bats, for example, through chasing and catching bats and/or ingestion of bats. This close contact forms a theoretical risk of transmission of ABLV to dogs and cats and, theoretically, to their owners. Currently this chain of transmission is rated as remote, but possible.

**Actions following an animal bat exposure**

**1. Notify Biosecurity Queensland – to be done by a veterinarian**

There is a legal requirement to notify Biosecurity Queensland of all suspected ABLV incidents. Please contact a Biosecurity Queensland Veterinary Officer: 13 25 23 (business hours) / 1800 675 888 (any time)

**2. Obtain the history: note – the following may not always be possible.**

- Details should be obtained about the incident when the client's animal came in contact with the bat.

**NOTE: UQ staff are not authorised to handle bats *per se*.**

**3. If the bat is available, Queensland Health, Coopers Plain should be contacted**

(07 3276 6062) for testing. If the incident occurs out of hours, Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888 should be contacted to arrange testing.

**NOTE: UQ staff are not authorised to handle bats *per se*.**

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4. If the client reports that they themselves have been scratched or bitten by a bat, local Population Health Unit, (Appendix 1) must be informed of this potential exposure to ABLV.

**Following steps must be taken by staff with appropriate PPE in place and this includes long-sleeved shirt, face shield, double nitrile gloves. Students are not permitted to be in contact with pets which were suspected of having come in contact with a bat.**

**Actions if the bat tests negative for ABLV**

- When the bat tests negative for ABLV, there is no risk to the in-contact animal and the case is closed.

**Actions if the bat tests positive for ABLV or is not available**

- If the bat is available and tests positive or is not available for testing, this means that there is a real risk of the pet owners or other in-contact humans contracting ABLV infection from the pet.
- Public health guidance is that the risk of transmission of ABLV from a dog or a cat to a person is very low but the risk exists. If such transmission was to occur, the potential outcomes are obviously extremely serious as both reported cases of ABLV infection in humans have been fatal.

**Actions for untested or test pending patients requiring hospitalisation for treatment**

- For the duration of the treatment all staff in contact with the patient are required to wear appropriate PPE (Long sleeved shirt, Face shield, double nitrile gloves)
- Appropriate cage signage indicating possible exposure.
- Mandatory testing of bat if available as per protocol.
- Clear notation on medical record of infection unknown bat exposure that must remain for 2 years.

Advice to the owner should include the following options:

**1. Euthanasia**

To avoid any further risk of humans contracting ABLV infection from the pet, the owner has the option of authorising euthanasia of the pet (especially in those cases where it can be established that physical contact between the animal and the bat definitely occurred.)

**2. Monitor the animal for up to 2 years**

The pet owner can keep the animal at home but should be advised to observe their pet closely for one to two years for any changes in behaviour or signs of ill-health (due to the possible long incubation period). **These should be immediately reported to Biosecurity Queensland.**

The owner needs to also understand that taking no action does nothing to lower the potential risk of ABLV infection and that, if clinical signs suggesting ABLV disease are reported, it is likely to be recommended that the animal be euthanased and samples taken for examination.

**3. Vaccination**

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One option is a course of vaccination of the affected pet with inactivated rabies vaccine as soon as possible after the contact with the bat in order to mitigate the risks of clinical ABLV infection. This mirrors the current public health recommendation for post-exposure treatment of people against ABLV infection through the use of rabies vaccine on the basis of the limited available animal data and clinical experience supporting its use.

**Safety when administering the inactivated rabies vaccine**

- The veterinarian engaged to administer the inactivated rabies vaccine to the pet as well as any assistants are advised to wear suitable long-sleeved protective clothing, face shield, and double nitrile gloves and to use restraint measures as appropriate to avoid being bitten or scratched by the pet animal.
- Caution should also be exercised in relation to avoiding contamination of unhealed cuts or abraded skin.
- For any incident sustained, first-aid procedures should be applied and followed **immediately by seeking medical attention through the University Health Service 5460-1396 or their own GP.**
- Details of the incident must be recorded on UQ Incident Reporting site <http://www.uq.edu.au/ohs/index.html?page=141331> and choose UQ Safe – Incident.

**NOTE: Bats will not be admitted to the Clinic for any procedures.**

Receptions have the contacts details for Wildlife carers and this is also available on Y:\SVS\SVS-OHS-Public\VTH\SMALL ANIMALS HOSPITAL under file name “Contact information for bat referrals”.

**Important Numbers:**

- Biosecurity Queensland 13 25 23 (business hours); 1800 675 888 (any time)
- Population Health Units Spring Hill 3624 1111 / Coopers Plains 3000 9148 / Redcliff 3142 1800 / Ipswich 3810 1500
- Communicable diseases branch 3328 9724 or 3328 9728

## **First aid treatment for wounds from pets that have been in contact with bat**

For details, refer to [AVA Biosecurity Guidelines](#)

**Note: while the risks are very low, the following first aid procedures which are based on when in direct contact with bats will be applied.**

**Proper cleansing of the wound is the single most effective measure for reducing the transmission of rabies virus.**

- 1. Wash the wound(s) thoroughly with soap and water for **five minutes**. Wash gently, do not scrub the wound.**
- 2. After checking that the person is not allergic to iodine, the wound should be cleansed with povidone-iodine (Betadine).**
- 3. Eyes, nose or mouth should be flushed thoroughly with water.**
- 4. Immediately present to your medical practitioner OR the nearest emergency department who will make a decision on the appropriate treatment.**
- 5. For further information please contact QLD Public Health North 36241111.**

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Ref: <https://www.ava.com.au/sites/default/files/Guidelines-for-veterinary-personal-biosecurity-2017-FINAL.pdf>

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**Appendix 1 Queensland Health contact numbers**

Public Health Units and the highlighted units are of are relevance to us due to their proximity.

- METRO NORTH  
Windsor 3624 1111  
Redcliffe 3142 1800
- METRO SOUTH  
Coopers Plains 3000 9148
- GOLD COAST  
Gold Coast 5668 3700
- WEST MORETON  
Ipswich 3413 1200
- SOUTH WEST  
Charleville 4656 8100
- DARLING DOWNS  
Toowoomba 4631 9888
- SUNSHINE COAST  
Maroochydore 5409 6600
- CENTRAL QUEENSLAND  
Rockhampton 4920 6989
- WIDE BAY  
Hervey Bay 4184 1800  
Bundaberg 4303 7500
- CENTRAL WEST  
Longreach 4658 4700
- NORTH QUEENSLAND  
Cairns and Hinterland 4226 0000  
Mackay 4885 6000  
Mt Isa 4744 4444  
Townsville 4433

***Associated Documents***

***Related Policies***

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<b>Revision</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author/s</b>	<b>Amendments</b>
1.0	04.2018	MKT, Bob D and Anne Covill	revised
2.0	1.2019	MKT, Bob D and Anne Covill	revised
3.0	9.2019	MKT, Bob D and Anne Covill	revised
4.0	4.2020	Bruce Smith, Bob D, Donna P, Myat KT, Mark Haworth	Addition of safety when administering inactivated rabies vaccine