



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
LANSING

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GUIDELINES FOR THE REPORTING OF RABIES CASES USING THE MICHIGAN DISEASE SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (MDSS)

As Michigan Local Health Department's (LHD) use of the Michigan Disease Surveillance System (MDSS) expands, there is sometimes a need to clarify use of the various forms available on the system. Rabies is one disease for which several events are reportable, including animal bites, cases of animal rabies, and cases of human rabies. There are three different forms in MDSS which can potentially be used by LHD's to report these events. The following are some general guidelines to promote consistency among health agencies in the transmission of this data.

Animal Bites

The Public Health Code requires that any animal bite be reported to the public health agency where the bitten person resides, as well as where the bite occurred, within 24 hours of the bite incident. [R325.180 (Rule 10) (6)] The purpose for this reporting is to allow for rapid assessment of the risk for rabies exposure, and if necessary, arrange for the capture and confinement of a live dog, cat, or ferret for a 10-day observation period, or the laboratory examination of an animal head. There is no requirement for LHD's to, in turn, report these incidents to the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH). However, MDSS can be used by local health departments to track the follow-up of these cases. There is now a specific "**Animal Bite**" form in MDSS for this use. After basic demographics are entered, pertinent information about the bite event can be entered to suit the needs LHD's with regard to this data. The standardized form was developed for MDSS because LHD's requested it, but MDCH does not utilize this data.

Animal Rabies

Cases of animal rabies are going to include any animals that test positive for rabies in the state. In most instances, these are wildlife species, but on occasion they include domestic species. MDSS contains a specific form for reporting animal rabies; "Rabies Case Investigation Report". This testing is conducted by the MDCH Bureau of Laboratories and laboratory reporting will result in a case of "**Rabies Animal**" being automatically generated into MDSS. An "RABIES ANIMAL" FORM MUST BE COMPLETED IN MDSS FOR ALL RABIES POSITIVE ANIMALS. Do not change the "**Rabies Animal**" form to an "**Animal Bite**" form as this will prevent the case of animal rabies from being reported to CDC electronically via MDSS. If a LHD wishes to also complete an "Animal Bite" form related to the rabies positive animal, they must create a new case.

In most instances, there will be a name associated with the animal, which is usually an exposed person, or the owner of an exposed animal, and this will be in the "**Patient Name**" field. The following are suggestions on how to populate the fields for laboratory confirmed cases of animal rabies:

Investigation Information:

Onset Date: date of collection for testing



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Diagnosis date: date of laboratory report
Patient status date: blank
Part of an outbreak: Unknown (to allow population of “Outbreak Name” field)
Outbreak Name: Enter species of animals testing positive, for example, “bat”
(This will help us to be able to easily view this data from a main page in MDSS)

Patient Information:

Name, first and last: Information on exposed person/pet owner
Street address: Address where positive animal was collected from, or exposed person/pet residence

Demographics: Leave blank

Referral Information: No change

Epidemiologic Information: Enter any pertinent data including county where exposure to the rabid animal occurred (if different from the exposed person’s address), as well as names, contact information, and exposure details for exposed persons and/or animals.

Other Information: Fill out as usual, except read “Relationship to Patient” as “Relationship to Rabid Animal”, which could include “owner” in the case of a domestic animal, or “home owner” or “pet owner” in most cases of wild animal exposure. Use “Comments or Additional Information” as needed to supply other pertinent information not covered by the form.

Human Rabies

Cases of human rabies are extremely rare, but **suspect** cases would include any patient with encephalitis of unknown cause for which rabies is a rule-out. While there is no specific form in MDSS for reporting these suspect cases, there are two forms that can be utilized for this purpose. The first is the “Basic Case Investigation Report”. The box marked “Rabies, human” should **only** be checked when reporting suspect cases of **human rabies**. **Exposure to a potentially rabid animal should not be entered as a case of Human Rabies**. Instead, these can be entered as an “Animal Bite”, or the information can be entered under “Rabies Animal” if the exposing animal tested positive for rabies. Another avenue to report suspect cases of human rabies would be via the “Encephalitis, Primary” form. This form allows for more detailed data entry with regard to clinical information, and might be the best choice for suspect cases, since alternate diagnoses are usually found.

If you have additional questions or concerns about how to enter this data, please call Dr. Kim Signs at 517-335-8165.

For up-to-date information about
Rabies in Michigan, please visit the [Michigan Emerging Diseases](http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases) website at:
www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases