

## Topic: Rabies in a free-roaming kitten in rural Chemainus.

On July 9<sup>th</sup> 2025, a free-roaming kitten rescued from roadside in rural Chemainus began experiencing symptoms consistent with rabies. The kitten was euthanized, and test results received on July 21 confirmed the cat was infected with rabies.

We have contacted everyone at risk from this animal after it was found on July 9<sup>th</sup>. However, the period of communicability started as early as July 2<sup>nd</sup>, so we are issuing a public release in the very low likelihood that someone was exposed to this kitten in its infectiousness period (July 2-9, 2025)

The public release asks anyone who thinks they may have been exposed to this kitten (on the 8000 block of Chemainus Road) between July 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> to contact public health communicable disease directly at 250-519-3575 for assessment.

While further test results are pending, it is expected the kitten was infected by a bat. In B.C., the only animals that carry rabies are bats and very rarely bat variant rabies spills over into other animals or people. **The risk of rabies to humans is from bats and this isolated case does not change the risk in B.C.**

As before, if a patient presents with a history of contact with a bat in BC, or a bite from another mammal that has you concerned about the risk of rabies, please call your local Communicable Disease unit to assess the need for rabies post exposure prophylaxis (RPEP) (after “business” hours, call the on-call Medical Health Officer (MHO)).

Consultation with the Communicable Disease Unit/Medical Health Officer should occur prior to any decision to provide RPEP. Release of rabies vaccine and rabies immune globulin for post exposure prophylaxis is authorized by an MHO, including at hospital pharmacies and public health units.

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### Island Health Medical Health Officers

Chief MHO: Dr. Réka Gustafson 250-519-3406; North Island: Dr. Charmaine Enns 250-331-8591

Central Island: Dr Mark Cachia (interim) 250-739-6304; Cowichan Region: Dr. Melissa Wan (interim) 250-737-2020

South Island: Dr. Carol Fenton, Dr. Christina Kay, Dr. Mike Benusic 250-519-3406

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