DECIDE WITH CONFIDENCE
Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Decision Tree

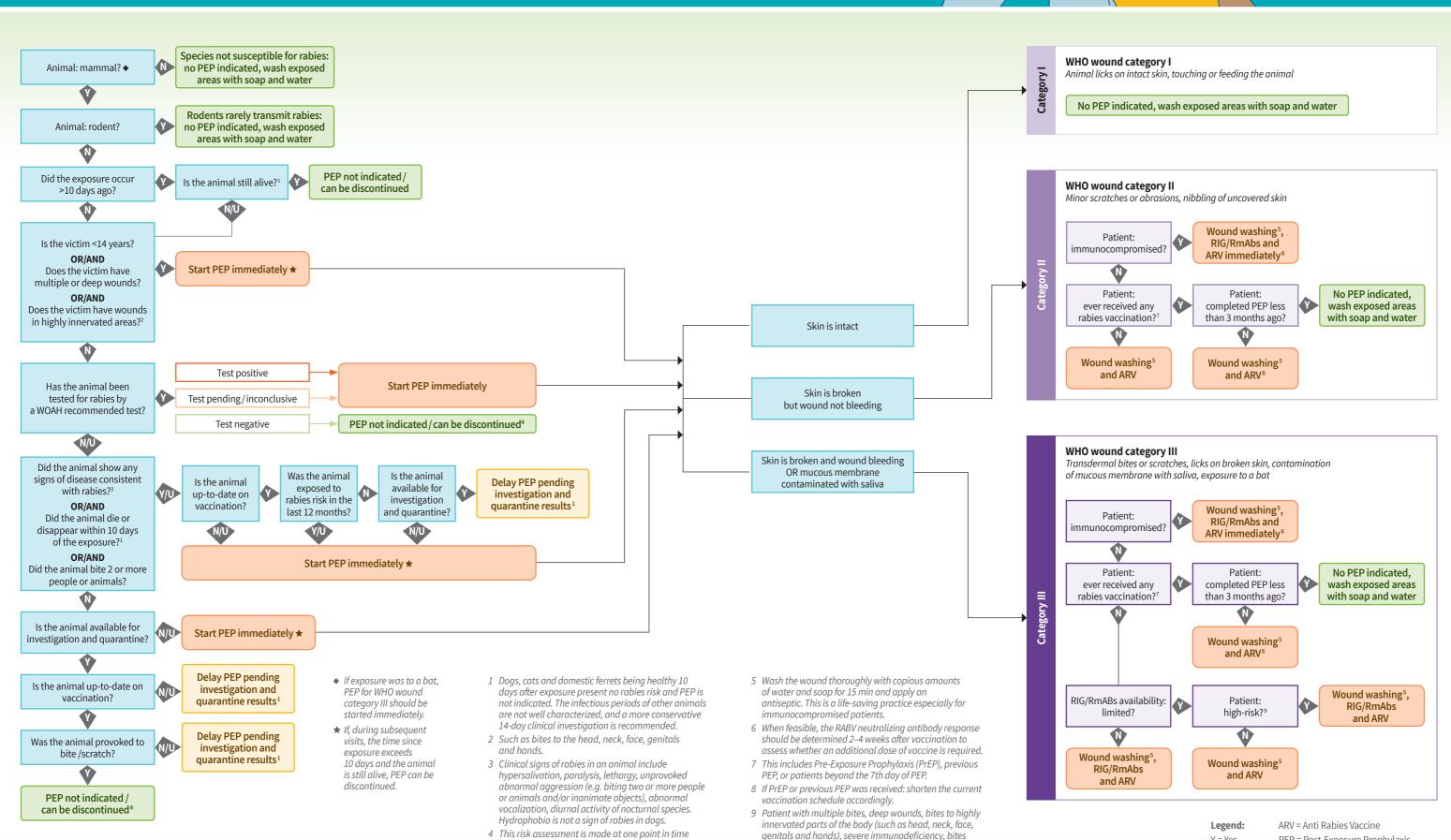**World Health Organization**
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **South-East Asia**

Animal: mammal? ◆ — **N** → Species not susceptible for rabies: no PEP indicated, wash exposed areas with soap and water

Y ↓

Animal: rodent? — **Y** → Rodents rarely transmit rabies: no PEP indicated, wash exposed areas with soap and water

N ↓

Did the exposure occur >10 days ago? — **Y** → Is the animal still alive?[1] — **Y** → PEP not indicated / can be discontinued

N ↓ (and N/U from "Is the animal still alive?")

Is the victim <14 years? **OR/AND** Does the victim have multiple or deep wounds? **OR/AND** Does the victim have wounds in highly innervated areas?[2] — **Y** → **Start PEP immediately ★**

N ↓

Has the animal been tested for rabies by a WOAH recommended test? — **Y** →
- Test positive → **Start PEP immediately**
- Test pending / inconclusive → **Start PEP immediately**
- Test negative → PEP not indicated / can be discontinued[4]

N/U ↓

Did the animal show any signs of disease consistent with rabies?[3] **OR/AND** Did the animal die or disappear within 10 days of the exposure?[1] **OR/AND** Did the animal bite 2 or more people or animals? — **Y/U** → Is the animal up-to-date on vaccination? — **Y** → Was the animal exposed to rabies risk in the last 12 months? — **N/U** → Is the animal available for investigation and quarantine? — **Y** → Delay PEP pending investigation and quarantine results[1]

(from "Is the animal up-to-date on vaccination?" **N/U**, from "Was the animal exposed..." **Y/U**, from "Is the animal available..." **N/U**) → **Start PEP immediately ★**

N ↓

Is the animal available for investigation and quarantine? — **N/U** → **Start PEP immediately ★**

Y ↓

Is the animal up-to-date on vaccination? — **N/U** → Delay PEP pending investigation and quarantine results[1]

Y ↓

Was the animal provoked to bite /scratch? — **N/U** → Delay PEP pending investigation and quarantine results[1]

Y ↓

PEP not indicated / can be discontinued[4]

Skin is intact
Skin is broken but wound not bleeding
Skin is broken and wound bleeding OR mucous membrane contaminated with saliva

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Category I

WHO wound category I
Animal licks on intact skin, touching or feeding the animal

No PEP indicated, wash exposed areas with soap and water

Category II

WHO wound category II
Minor scratches or abrasions, nibbling of uncovered skin

Patient: immunocompromised? — **Y** → Wound washing[5], RIG/RmAbs and ARV immediately[6]

N ↓

Patient: ever received any rabies vaccination?[7] — **Y** → Patient: completed PEP less than 3 months ago? — **Y** → No PEP indicated, wash exposed areas with soap and water

Patient: ever received any rabies vaccination? **N** → Wound washing[5] and ARV

Patient: completed PEP less than 3 months ago? **N** → Wound washing[5] and ARV[8]

Category III

WHO wound category III
Transdermal bites or scratches, licks on broken skin, contamination of mucous membrane with saliva, exposure to a bat

Patient: immunocompromised? — **Y** → Wound washing[5], RIG/RmAbs and ARV immediately[6]

N ↓

Patient: ever received any rabies vaccination?[7] — **Y** → Patient: completed PEP less than 3 months ago? — **Y** → No PEP indicated, wash exposed areas with soap and water

Patient: completed PEP less than 3 months ago? **N** → Wound washing[5] and ARV[8]

Patient: ever received any rabies vaccination? **N** ↓

RIG/RmABs availability: limited? — **Y** → Patient: high-risk?[9] — **Y** → Wound washing[5], RIG/RmAbs and ARV

RIG/RmABs availability: limited? **N** → Wound washing[5], RIG/RmAbs and ARV

Patient: high-risk? **N** → Wound washing[5] and ARV

◆ If exposure was to a bat, PEP for WHO wound category III should be started immediately.

★ If, during subsequent visits, the time since exposure exceeds 10 days and the animal is still alive, PEP can be discontinued.

1 Dogs, cats and domestic ferrets being healthy 10 days after exposure present no rabies risk and PEP is not indicated. The infectious periods of other animals are not well characterized, and a more conservative 14-day clinical investigation is recommended.

2 Such as bites to the head, neck, face, genitals and hands.

3 Clinical signs of rabies in an animal include hypersalivation, paralysis, lethargy, unprovoked abnormal aggression (e.g. biting two or more people or animals and/or inanimate objects), abnormal vocalization, diurnal activity of nocturnal species. Hydrophobia is not a sign of rabies in dogs.

4 This risk assessment is made at one point in time with the available information. If new information is provided or the status of the animal changes, PEP might be indicated.

5 Wash the wound thoroughly with copious amounts of water and soap for 15 min and apply an antiseptic. This is a life-saving practice especially for immunocompromised patients.

6 When feasible, the RABV neutralizing antibody response should be determined 2–4 weeks after vaccination to assess whether an additional dose of vaccine is required.

7 This includes Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), previous PEP, or patients beyond the 7th day of PEP.

8 If PrEP or previous PEP was received: shorten the current vaccination schedule accordingly.

9 Patient with multiple bites, deep wounds, bites to highly innervated parts of the body (such as head, neck, face, genitals and hands), severe immunodeficiency, bites from an animal with probable (clinically) or confirmed (laboratory) rabies, exposure to a bat (bite, scratch or exposure of mucous membrane).

Legend:

Y = Yes
N = No
U = Unknown

ARV = Anti Rabies Vaccine
PEP = Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
RIG = Rabies Immunoglobulin
RmAbs = Rabies Monoclonal Antibodies