**Protocol: rabies vectors**

When a potential rabies carrier is received, **minimal handling** is applicable.

Wear examination gloves, safety glasses and any other appropriate personal protection.

Keep track of every person potentially exposed; Good Samaritan (make sure address and contact info is recorded upon admission) and students, interns, residents, faculty

Remember that the Athens Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (AVDL) is NOT certified for rabies testing in case of human exposure.

* **If no human/domestic animal exposure**:
  + We will charge ~$80 for test if the client is interested in the rabies status of the animal.
  + Let the client know that she/he can submit the head/body to the state lab for testing, but it will cost them about $150.
* **If a bite/exposure incident occurs and rabies is suspected**, the client needs to contact The Environmental Health Office in their county of record to report the incident. In cases of human exposure, Georgia Poison Control, and the family MD need to be contacted as well. It is the job of these health professionals to determine if post-exposure rabies treatment is necessary. Our test is not for purposes of public health. Keep the body in the hold cooler in anticipation of state rabies testing.
* The **Environmental Health Office** of the county of origin of the animal will complete the bite incident report in the new program called SENDSS (State Electronic Notifiable Disease Surveillance System) and make arrangements for free testing in the State Public health Lab. Free testing will only occur if a true bite/exposure incident has occurred. More information on this and the phone numbers of county public health departments is found on our website at: http://vet.uga.edu/dlab/news/news
* Once the County health department has been contacted and information entered into SENDSS, the head (or entire carcass if small animal) can either be directly shipped to the Public Health Lab in Decatur or, if a necropsy is to be performed here, we will conduct in-house rabies testing, then forward the brain to the state lab. **Please, feel free to call Laura Griffiths (Serology/Virology Lab Manager; direct line: 2-5911) for any further clarifications**.

- **RACOONS, SKUNKS, COYOTES, FOXES, BOBCATS**: **Rabies vectors!!**

- Any bite should be considered as a possible exposure to the rabies virus (the animal may or may not present signs).

- Euthanasia is likely (even if no bite, euthanasia with minimal damage to the head) and the brain should be submitted for rabies testing. (Georgia Public Health Laboratory or Epidemiology Program of the Division of Public Health)

- **WOODCHUCKS AND GROUNDHOGS (*Marmota monax*):** rodents that **ARE CONSIDERED as rabies vector.** Apply same rules as for carnivorous species.

- **OTHER RODENTS AND LAGOMORPHS:** (Squirrels, rats, mice, hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils, chipmunks and rabbits): NOT CONSIDERED as rabies vectors except if bite wounds or neurologic signs are present. No rabies testing except if required by a doctor.

- **BATS**: **Rabies vectors**. Capture and euthanize. The entire animal should be sent to the laboratory for rabies examination. (Georgia Public Health Laboratory or Epidemiology Program of the Division of Public Health)

- **NON RESERVOIR SPECIES** (opossums, otters, polecats, beavers, weasels…): Risk of rabies is considered low, but increases if neuro signs.