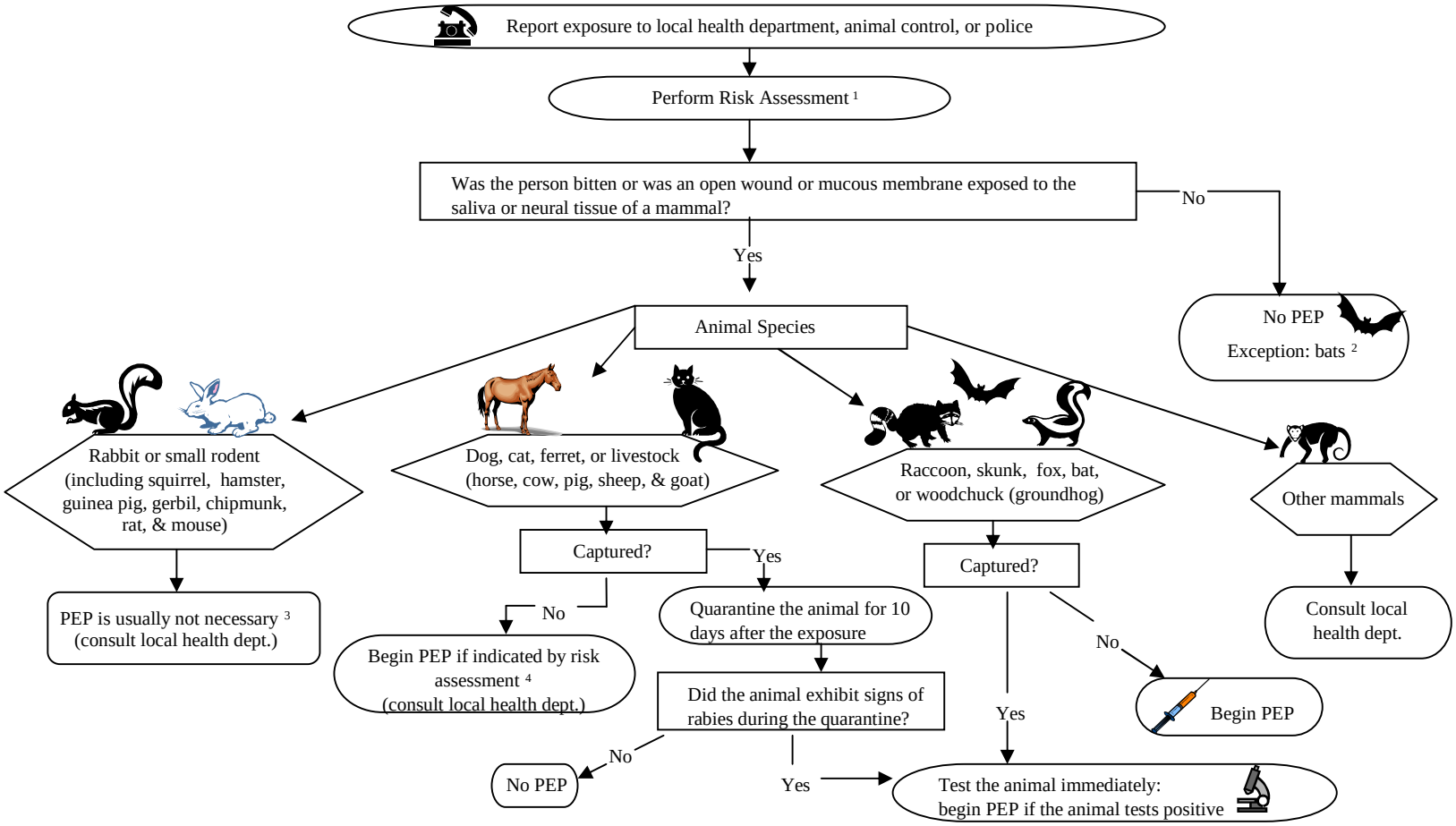
Algorithm for Rabies Postexposure Prophylaxis (PEP) in Maryland



1. Risk assessment includes species, immunization status, health status, type & circumstances of exposure (bite vs. nonbite, provoked vs. unprovoked), & availability for quarantine or testing.
2. PEP is recommended for all persons with bite, scratch, or mucous membrane exposure to a bat, unless the bat is available & tests negative for rabies. PEP might also be appropriate when there is reasonable probability that such exposure may have occurred. PEP should be considered for a person who has direct contact with a bat, unless the person is certain that no exposure occurred. When a bat is found indoors & there is no history of contact, the likely effectiveness of PEP must be balanced against the low risk such exposures appear to present. In this setting, PEP can be considered for persons who were in the same room as the bat & who might be unaware that a bite or direct contact had occurred (e.g., a sleeping person awakens to find a bat in the room or an adult witnesses a bat in the room with a previously unattended child, mentally disabled person, or intoxicated person) & rabies cannot be ruled out by testing the bat. PEP would not be warranted for other household members.
3. Rabbits & small rodents are *almost* never found to be infected with rabies & have not been known to transmit rabies to humans. Woodchucks (groundhogs) account for most cases of rabies in rodents.
4. While looking for the animal, begin PEP within 1 day for a cat exposure or 2 days for a dog, ferret, or livestock exposure; discontinue PEP if the animal is found & is either healthy & can be quarantined for 10 days after the exposure or is tested & found negative for rabies.
5. In some situations, it may be appropriate to initiate PEP before test results are available; consult your local health department.

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Epidemiology and Disease Control Programs, Center for Veterinary Public Health 11/2005