Guideline for the Collection and Transport of Category 3 (C3) Bats

1. **Purpose**
   The purpose of this procedure is to outline the agreed approach for the collection, euthanasia and transportation of Category 3 (C3) bats to Forensic and Scientific Services for testing. C3 bats are tested for Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABLV).

2. **Scope**
   This Guideline is relevant to all staff supporting the retrieval, collection, euthanasing and transportation of C3 bats, including:
   - Public Health Units (PHU) and The Department of Health, Communicable Disease Unit (CDU)
   - Forensic and Scientific Services (FSS)
   - Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP)
   - The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

3. **Related documents**
   Memorandum of Agreement between Queensland Health and the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

4. **Notification Requirements**
   **4.1 First Response to a C3 Bat Incident**
   When EHP, RSPCA or a PHU are contacted by a person who has had a C3 bat exposure, the person must be advised to seek immediate medical attention.

   A Category 3 bat exposure occurs when a person is either bitten or scratched by a bat, or has permucosal (mucous membrane such as the eye) or percutaneous (skin) exposure to either bat saliva or neural tissue, whether or not the person is vaccinated against lyssavirus.

   People with C3 bat exposures should be directed to their GP or nearest emergency department or to ring 13HEALTH for advice. If the PHU is not the first point of contact they should be notified as soon as possible after the event by the organisation taking the initial call. If EHP or RSPCA is not the first point of contact, they should be notified as soon as possible as to the whereabouts of the C3 bat, if it is available for collection.
4.2 Notification to FSS

Public Health Units are to notify FSS when a bat is to be transported for testing and organise the details for its delivery. The on-call officer for FSS should be notified for deliveries organised after hours or on weekends and public holidays.

5. Handling and Collection of C3 Bats

5.1 Collection of C3 Bats

Each public health unit should maintain a list of local trained and vaccinated bat carers who are available to collect C3 bats for testing.

Local response arrangements should be developed between PHUs and their local EHP officers or RSPCA and/or other bat carer organisations with respect to bat collections, particularly regarding out of hours incidents. Public health units can contact their local bat carers directly or call the RSPCA hotline 1300 ANIMAL (1300264625) for assistance in accessing a bat carer to collect a C3 bat.

Bats should only be collected for testing when it is safe to do so. Public health unit staff must not attempt to collect or handle live bats under any circumstances.

EHP has the legislative authority under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 to require that C3 bats be surrendered for euthanasia within 24 hours of collection.

5.2 Handling of C3 Bats

Puncture resistant gloves (refer to Australian Standard 2161.3) must be worn at all times when handling C3 bats. Live bats should only be handled by people who have been trained to safely handle bats and who have been fully vaccinated for rabies and/or have been shown to have protective antibodies in the past two years (refer EHP Procedural Guide – Managing flying-fox and insectivorous bats).

Queensland Health will fund and supply suitable personal protective equipment to PHUs for distribution to bat carers when required, to assist in the collection, euthanasia and transportation of C3 bats. Requests for supply/restocking of equipment should be directed to the local PHU (contact details in Section 9).

5.3 Euthanasing of C3 Bats

Local arrangements should be in place between the public health units and RSPCA or other local bat carer organisations for identifying veterinarians and/or other authorised persons able to euthanase C3 bats.

6. Transport of C3 Bats

6.1 Coordination of Transport

The local PHU will coordinate the transportation of a C3 bat to FSS following consultation with FSS. One of the transport companies designated by FSS (below) for the transportation of bats should be utilised wherever possible. The
appropriate account number should be quoted and the transaction marked “charge receiver”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Contact details</th>
<th>Account number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toll Priority</td>
<td>131531</td>
<td>402609</td>
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<tr>
<td>(overnight and time restricted same day service)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toll Fast</td>
<td>133278</td>
<td>Individual PHUs to set up account if requiring this service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Same day service, Brisbane and surrounding areas only)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Couriers</td>
<td>By special arrangement with Public Health Virology</td>
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6.2 Packing Bat Specimens

Bat carcasses are to be sealed in a plastic bag (to prevent leakage of body fluid) and packed into an insulated container with a freezer brick to keep the bat cool. (The bat must not be frozen as this liquefies the animal’s brain, making testing difficult). The container should be sealed with packing tape, and must be received by the FSS laboratory within a maximum of 42 hours of the exposure (within 24 hours is optimal).

6.3 Documentation

The content should be marked: **Public Health Diagnostic Specimen**.

**Attention:** Senior Scientist
Public Health Virology
Forensic and Scientific Services, Department of Health
39 Kessels Road
Coopers Plains, Qld 4108

All bats submitted to FSS must be accompanied by the correct paperwork. This is essential to identify the animal, where the incident occurred and to allow the PHU to notify the exposed person of the test results.

7. Reporting Results

- Within six hours of receipt of the bat specimen, or as agreed between FSS and the relevant PHU, FSS will provide an immunofluorescence antibody test (IFT) and PCR (Flying Fox only) result to the relevant PHU. PCR result for microbats can take at least 24 hours.
- The PHU will advise the person exposed to the bat and their treating doctor of the results as soon as possible.
- The PHU will advise CDU when a bat tests positive to ABLV.
- CDU will advise EHP and/or RSPCA, the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) of locations where a positive C3 bat was found.
- A summary of all bats tested during each calendar year shall be submitted to the CDU by FSS at the beginning of each calendar year.
- An annual report on C3 bat exposures will be produced by CDU and made available on the Queensland health website.
- CDU will advise public health units, EHP, RSPCA, DAFF and other key stakeholders when the report is available.

8. Rabies Vaccination

8.1 Queensland Health will fund pre-exposure prophylaxis courses of rabies vaccine (and subsequent booster doses as required) for Queensland Health pre-approved EHP/RSPCA staff/volunteers who collect and/or euthanase C3 bats for submission to FSS for testing.

Queensland Health will fund the booster dose of rabies vaccine for any EHP/RSPCA bat carer/officer who assists in the management (i.e. collection and submission) of C3 bats and has had a pre-exposure course of rabies vaccine but is due for a booster dose.

Local PHUs will make arrangements with the Queensland Health Immunisation Program to supply designated medical practitioners with the relevant doses of rabies vaccine for the purpose of vaccinating approved C3 bat collectors.

NB: The Department of Health funds only the vaccine and not the costs associated with either immune status testing or administration of the vaccine.
9. EHP, RSPCA and Department of Health Contact Details

9.1 Maintenance of Contact Lists
Contact lists for PHU, QHFSS, EHP and RSPCA should be updated on an annual basis and should include both office and after hour contact details, if applicable. All parties should notify significant changes to the contact lists immediately they occur. Current contact lists are attached at the end of this procedure.

Advice of changes should be emailed to the Communicable Disease Unit on email NDPC@health.qld.gov.au to enable the contact list to be updated and circulated to all parties.

9.2 Department of Health Contacts for C3 Bat Exposures
For State-wide operational issues, contact:
Manager, Notifiable Diseases Prevention and Control
Communicable Diseases Unit, 07 3328 9722

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Health Contacts</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Facsimile</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicable Diseases Unit</strong></td>
<td>(07) 3328 9722</td>
<td>(07) 3328 9782</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager, Notifiable Diseases Prevention and Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 3, 15 Butterfield St</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Herston QLD 4006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:ndpc@health.qld.gov.au">ndpc@health.qld.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bruce Harrower</strong></td>
<td>(07) 3000 9179</td>
<td>(07) 3000 9186</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FSS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scientist – Virology Forensic and Scientific Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Health Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>39 Kessels Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>COOPERS PLAINS QLD 4108</td>
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<tr>
<td>After hours or weekends: 0431499500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:Bruce_Harrower@health.qld.gov.au">Bruce_Harrower@health.qld.gov.au</a></td>
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For contact details of local Public Health Units, please go to the following web page:


### 9.3 EHP Contacts for Handling C3 Bats
For state-wide operational issues, contact:

Director Wildlife Management: Rebecca Williams Rebecca.williams@ehp.qld.gov.au

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Southern Region</th>
<th>Sally Egan, Regional Manager, Wildlife Management</th>
<th>07 4688 1258</th>
<th>0477 308 755</th>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Region</td>
<td>Michael Joyce, Operations Manager, Wildlife Management</td>
<td>07 4796 7787</td>
<td>0427 838 008</td>
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### 9.4 RSPCA Contacts for Handling C3 Bats
For state-wide operational issues contact: RSPCA Qld: Sheila Collecott

Email: scollecott@rspcaqld.org.au  Phone: 3426 9901


### 10. Review
This Guideline is due for review on: October 2016

**Date of Last Review:** January 2015

### 11. Business Area Contact

Communicable Disease Unit. Ph: 3328 9728

### 12. Approval and Implementation

**Policy Custodian:**
Manager Notifiable Diseases prevention and Control
Responsible Executive Team Member:
Director Notifiable Diseases Prevention and Control

Approving Officer:
Senior Director Communicable Diseases Unit

Approval date: 09 January 2015
Effective from: 09 January 2015