

Rabies risk in Timor-Leste: Pre and Post Travel Assessment

Key information

- Timor-Leste is now considered a high-risk country for rabies.
- Travellers to Timor-Leste should have a risk assessment for rabies vaccination (pre-exposure prophylaxis) and be provided with rabies prevention advice prior to travel.
- Travellers returning from Timor-Leste with any animal bites, scratches or animal saliva exposure should be assessed for post-exposure prophylaxis. Contact the ACT Health Public Health Response Unit on **(02) 5124 9213**.

Background

- Timor-Leste was previously considered to be free of rabies.
- Rabies has recently been detected in dogs and humans within the Oecusse enclave of Timor-Leste, following an outbreak of the disease in the neighbouring East Nusa Tenggara province of Indonesia.
- All of Timor-Leste should now be considered high-risk for rabies given the potential for transmission on the island.
- Rabies is a disease which affects mammals and is caused by rabies virus and other lyssaviruses.

Recommendations

For people travelling to Timor-Leste and other [high-risk](#) countries for rabies:

- Undertake a [risk assessment](#) for pre-exposure rabies vaccination and offer where appropriate.
- Educate travellers on key preventive behaviours when travelling:
 - Avoid contact with bats and other wild or domestic animals, and
 - Supervise children around wild and domestic animals.
- Educate travellers on what to do in the case of any exposure to animal bites, scratches or saliva exposure:
 - Immediately wash any wound with soap and water for a minimum of 15 minutes
 - Apply an antiseptic solution such as alcohol or povidone-iodine, and
 - Seek medical attention immediately, and have any treatment comprehensively documented, where possible.

Travellers from Timor-Leste and other high-risk countries for rabies who have experienced animal bites, scratches, or animal saliva exposure should*:

- Be assessed for post-exposure prophylaxis - contact the **ACT Health Public Health Response Unit** on **(02) 5124 9213** for PEP assessment
- Receive appropriate post-exposure wound management

**A reminder that this management also applies to anyone who has been exposed to saliva or bitten or scratched by a bat in Australia due to the risk of Lyssavirus.*

For more information:

- Visit the [Australian Immunisation Handbook's Rabies and other lyssaviruses](#) page
- [ACT Health - Rabies and Australian Bat Lyssavirus webpage](#)