

ABLV BAT STATS



Australian Bat Lyssavirus Report – June 2026

Cases of ABLV infection - January to June 2026

There were 6 cases of Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV) infection reported in bats in Australia between January and June 2026. This includes 5 from Queensland and 1 from South Australia. An additional case in NSW from December 2025 was finalised in January. It is summarised below but included in the 2025 total in Table 1.

Queensland

Five flying-foxes tested positive for ABLV in the first half of the year in Queensland. The first in January was a young black flying-fox (BFF) found on the ground of its cage while in care. The bat had excessive salivation progressing to abnormal eye movements and a pale tongue, and later died. Also in January, two LRFFs from South East Queensland were found to be positive to ABLV. The first was found hanging low in a tree in a captive animal enclosure and on assessment found to have limp legs and weak wing movement. Initially the bat was keen to drink but this progressed to refusing fluids, limb twitching, abnormal vocalisations and respiratory distress. The second LRFF presented weak, grinding its teeth and biting a towel. After 12 hours it became non-responsive, still biting the towel. Both bats were euthanased. ABLV has been found in this species at this location in previous years, including a cluster in 2021 (Barrett 2021¹; [ABLV Bat Stats June 2021](#)).

The third LRFF presented to a wildlife hospital in February, weak in the legs, very anxious, screaming and with respiratory crackles. Finally, also in February a BFF was rescued from a shopping centre food court with neurological signs of biting, body jerks and aggression. The bat was euthanased and found to be positive for ABLV.

New South Wales

A black flying-fox (BFF) pup was rescued from a road at the end of December 2025. In January, after approximately 2 weeks in care, it began showing mild aggression towards other bats including food guarding. The pup was isolated. The aggression worsened and it began salivating and showed vocal changes and sensitivities to sound. The pup died, and tested positive for ABLV.



Black flying-fox
Photo: Duncan McCaskill (CC)

Table 1: ABLV infection in Australian bats[^]

YEAR	NSW	NT	QLD	VIC	WA	SA	Total
1995 - 2000	10	1	83 ^{#+}	0	0	0	94
2001	0	0	9	1	4	0	14
2002	4	0	10	2	1	0	17
2003	5	0	3	2	0	0	10
2004	5	0	6	1	0	0	12
2005	6	0	5	0	0	0	11
2006	2	0	4	0	0	0	6
2007	6	0	2	0	0	0	8
2008	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2009	2	0	8	0	0	0	10
2010	0	0	8	0	1	0	9
2011	0	0	4	2	0	0	6
2012	1	0	3	0	0	1	5
2013	3	0	11	0	0	0	14
2014	5	1	14	1	11	0	32
2015	10	1	11	0	0	0	22
2016	5	1	8	1	0	0	15
2017	4	0	19	3	2	0	28
2018	5	0	5	1	0	0	11
2019	6	0	1	0	0	0	7
2020	5	0	9	4	0	0	18
2021	10	1	17	5	0	2	35
2022	1	1	8	1	0	1	12
2023	1	1	11	1	0	5	19
2024	2	0	3	0	0	3	8
2025	3	2	9	2	0	0	16
2026 (to June)	0	0	5	0	0	1	6
Total	100	9	276	27	19	13	445

[^] Infection confirmed by FAT, PCR, IHC and/or virus isolation. ACT and TAS have not recorded any cases of ABLV infection that satisfy this case definition.

[#] A BFF from QLD was diagnosed retrospectively in 1996, when ABLV was first recognised.

⁺ Higher numbers of ABLV infected bats were associated with peak years of testing in 1997-1998.

South Australia

In May a grey-headed flying-fox was found dead in a captive animal enclosure. It tested positive for ABLV.

Human contact

Potentially infectious contact with humans was reported for one of the ABLV infected flying-foxes. Clinical advice was provided by an experienced public health official.



Grey headed flying-fox
Photo: Mike Lehmann via Wikimedia (CC)

Why are bats submitted for ABLV testing?

Bats are submitted for ABLV testing for a variety of reasons. A common reason is contact between the bat and a person with the potential for ABLV transmission (e.g. a bite or scratch). Bats are also regularly submitted following contact with a pet dog or cat (Figure 1). Bats displaying unusual or aggressive behaviour or other neurological signs may be tested; these signs can occur with ABLV infection but can also be due to a number of other diseases. Bats that show other clinical signs e.g. respiratory signs, bats that die or are euthanased due to trauma, and bats that are found dead may also be submitted for testing.

Figure 1: ABLV tested bats – Contact with people and pets

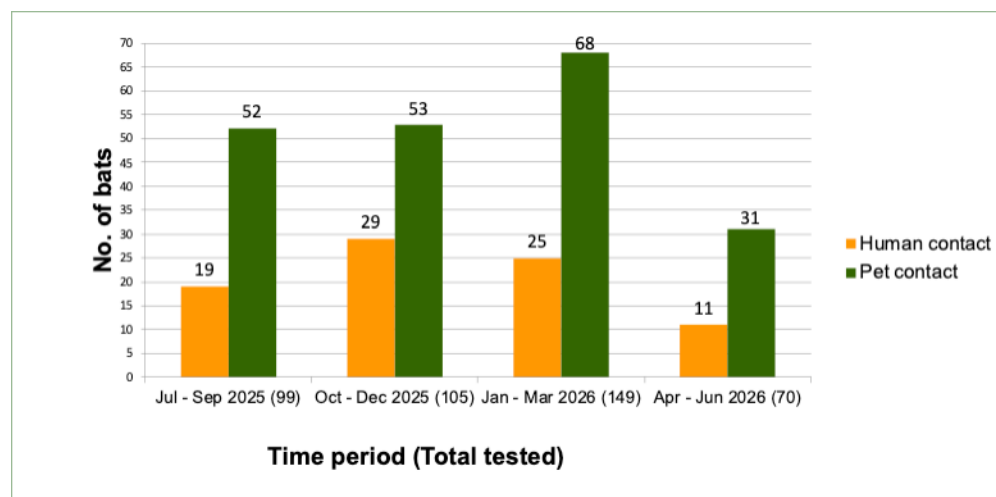


Figure 1 presents reported human-bat contacts which, based on Young & McCall 2010,² is an underestimate of the true contact frequency. Not all bat contact is reported, and for the majority of reports the bat is not available for testing.

If bats had both human and pet contact, they are only reported as human contact in the figure.

ABLV prevalence in bats and public health significance

There are no recent surveys on the prevalence of ABLV infection in wild bats. Surveys of wild-caught bats in the early 2000s indicated an ABLV prevalence in the wild bat population of less than 1%.³ ABLV infection is more common in sick, injured and orphaned bats, especially those with neurological signs.⁴ People are more likely to have contact with bats that are unwell or debilitated, as these bats may be found on or near the ground.⁵



Large forest bat
Photo: © Lindy Lumsden

ABLV infection causes a range of clinical signs in bats, which can include abnormal behaviour such as uncharacteristic aggression, paralysis or paresis, and seizures. The behavioural changes may increase the likelihood of a person or pet being bitten or scratched when coming in contact with the bat. The likelihood of a person developing ABLV disease from contact with a bat is influenced by a number of factors including whether the bat was ABLV-infected, the type of contact e.g. bite or scratch, the vaccination status of the person, and whether the person sought medical attention.

ABLV prevalence in bats submitted for testing

Some of the bats that come into contact with people or pets are tested for ABLV. The percentage of ABLV infection in bats submitted for testing is of interest as an indicator of public exposure, however it is also heavily influenced by factors affecting which bats are submitted for testing. Each state and territory in Australia determines independently what bats are submitted for ABLV testing and this process may vary between jurisdictions.

A total of 219 bats were tested for ABLV in Australia between January and June 2026 (Table 2). This is an increase in the number of bats tested compared to the same period in 2025 (153 bats). There were 6 cases of ABLV infection reported (2.7% of the bats submitted for testing) (Table 3). All detections were in flying-foxes (4.3% of flying-foxes tested). As described above, testing of unwell bats is not representative of the whole bat population; consequently these results over-estimate the level of ABLV infection in the wider bat population.

Table 2: ABLV testing by bat species (Jan - Jun 2026)

Species	No. tested	No. ABLV infected
Flying-foxes, blossom & tube-nosed bats		
<i>Pteropus alecto</i> /Black Flying-fox	76	2
<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i> /Grey-headed Flying-fox	46	1
<i>Pteropus scapulatus</i> /Little Red Flying-fox	10	3
<i>Pteropus</i> spp.	4	0
<i>Pteropus conspicillatus</i> /Spectacled Flying-fox	3	0
<i>Nyctimene robinsoni</i> /Eastern Tube-nosed bat	1	0
Insectivorous bats (microbats)		
<i>Vespertilionidae</i> spp.	11	0
<i>Chalinolobus gouldii</i> /Gould's Wattled Bat	4	0
<i>Macroderma gigas</i> /Ghost Bat	4	0
<i>Nyctophilus</i> spp.	4	0
<i>Nyctophilus geoffroyi</i> /Lesser Long-eared Bat	3	0
<i>Vespadelus vulturnus</i> /Little Forest Bat	2	0
<i>Vespadelus darlingtoni</i> /Large Forest Bat	2	0
<i>Austronomus australis</i> /White-striped Freetail Bat	2	0
<i>Nyctophilus gouldii</i> /Gould's Long-Eared Bat	1	0
<i>Nyctophilus arnhemensis</i> /Arnhem Long-eared Bat	1	0
<i>Falsistrellus tasmaniensis</i> /Eastern False Pipistrelle	1	0
<i>Saccolaimus flaviventris</i> /Yellow-bellied sheath-tail bat	1	0
<i>Ozimops</i> spp.	1	0
<i>Vespadelus</i> spp.	1	0
Microbat; species not identified	37	0
<i>Chiroptera</i> species not identified	1	0
TOTAL	219	6

*ABLV Bat Stats is published twice a year. The June issue presents data from the 6 month period of January to June. The December issue presents 12 months of data for the calendar year.



Eastern tube-nosed bat
Photo: © Lindy Lumsden



Eastern false pipistrelle
Photo: © Lindy Lumsden

Table 3: ABLV infection (%) in bats submitted for testing (Jan - Jun 2026)

	No. tested	No. infected	% infected*
Flying-foxes etc.	140	6	4.3%
Microbats	78	0	0%
Unidentified bat species	1	0	0%
TOTAL	219	6	2.7%

* This figure represents the percentage of ABLV infection in the bats tested. The level of ABLV infection in the wider bat population is estimated to be significantly lower.

Bat facts

- ✿ **ABLV is a virus** that infects Australian flying-foxes and insectivorous bats.
- ✿ **ABLV is closely related to**, but distinct from rabies virus.
- ✿ **ABLV can infect people and other mammals with a fatal outcome.** ABLV infection has led to the deaths of three people, two horses and many bats in Australia.
- ✿ **Community members should not handle bats.** If you find an injured or sick bat, contact a wildlife rehabilitation organisation or your local veterinarian.
- ✿ People trained in the care of bats **should be vaccinated and always use appropriate protection** when interacting with bats.
- ✿ **ABLV is transmitted** by the saliva of an infected animal introduced via a bite or scratch, or by contamination of mucous membranes or broken skin. In the event of a bat bite, scratch or other significant contact, **IMMEDIATELY** wash wounds thoroughly with soap and copious water for 15 minutes, apply a virucidal antiseptic such as an iodine-based antiseptic and allow antiseptic to dry. Bat saliva in the eyes or mouth should be rinsed out immediately and thoroughly with water. In the event of any exposure, regardless of any previous vaccination, **seek medical attention URGENTLY.**
- ✿ **For more information** contact your local Public Health agency for advice.
- ✿ **ABLV can also be transmitted to other mammals.** Prevent pets and other animals from coming into contact with bats. If an animal might have been bitten or scratched by a bat, **seek urgent veterinary advice.**
- ✿ ABLV is a nationally notifiable disease in Australia. **If you suspect a bat is infected with ABLV** contact your department of agriculture or primary industries, or call the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.
- ✿ **Where to find more information:** See page 5 & 6.

*Australian Centre for Disease Control. Rabies Virus and Other Lyssavirus (including Australian Bat Lyssavirus) Exposures and Infections. CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units. Canberra. 2025. Available from <https://www.cdc.gov.au/resources/publications/rabies-and-other-lyssavirus-cdna-national-guidelines-public-health-units>

Clinical signs of ABLV

An ABLV infected bat may display any of these clinical signs:

- Abnormal behaviour such as excitation / agitation / aggression
- Paralysis or paresis
- Unprovoked attacks
- Unusual vocalisation
- Inability to fly
- Convulsions / seizures / tremors

Apparently healthy bats with normal behaviours may still be infected with ABLV

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO HANDLE an injured, unwell or aggressive bat

REPORT it to your local wildlife rehabilitation group or vet.



Grey-headed flying foxes
Photo: © Shana Ahmed

Recent news and publications

New communication guide for Australian bat researchers

WHA in collaboration with the [Australasian Bat Society](#) have published a new communication guide for bats. The guide *Flying-foxes and Microbats: A Communication Guide for Researchers and Associated Media Teams* aims to assist researchers at universities and research institutions, media teams and other science communicators to prepare media releases and other public communication on research relating to Australian bats. It provides a step-by-step guide on preparing effective and balanced communications on research findings, useful talking points and resources, and advice on media framing. [Click here](#) for a direct link to the PDF, or go to the [WHA website](#) to download and access our bat communications guides.

Port Macquarie Council to replace Cocos Palms to protect wildlife

April: "Port Macquarie Hastings Council has announced it will begin the gradual removal and replacement of Cocos Palms (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*) across selected streets, parks and reserves in the coming months... Cocos Palms are classified as an environmental weed and are known to negatively impact flying-foxes – an important species that plays a critical role in pollinating and dispersing the seeds of native trees, including those that support koala habitat..." [Inside Local Government](#)

Meet the volunteer flying fox guardians caring for Yarra Bend's bats

May: "For more than 20 years, the passionate volunteers from Friends of Bats and Bushcare have dedicated countless hours to caring for one of Victoria's most misunderstood native animals, the Grey-headed Flying Fox. In that time, the Friends of Bats and Bushcare (FOBB) have helped thousands of orphaned and injured flying foxes return safely to the Yarra Bend Park colony through a community-run soft-release program..." [Parks Victoria](#)



Grey-headed flying fox
Photo: Sarah Curran

Are you interested in bat health?



Gould's wattled bat
Photo: © Lindy Lumsden

Wildlife Health Australia collates recent media articles and publications relating to bat health into a monthly 'Bat News' email. If you would like to receive the monthly email, please contact WHA: admin@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au

Where to find information

Wildlife Health Australia (WHA)

www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au

- Wildlife disease fact sheets, including [Australian Bat Lyssavirus](#) and [Zoonoses in Australian Bats](#)
- Links: WHA Bat Health Page - <https://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Resource-Centre/Bat-Health>

State/Territory departments of agriculture, health and environment

For links to agency websites see:

[State/ Territory Australian Bat Lyssavirus Resources](#)

Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care

- Healthdirect ABLV information and resources: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-bat-lyssavirus-infection>
- For current information for medical professionals, see the Series of National Guidelines on Rabies & ABLV: <https://www.cdc.gov.au/resources/publications/rabies-and-other-lyssavirus-cdna-national-guidelines-public-health-units>
- For vaccination information contact your local or regional Public Health Unit, or see the immunisation handbook: <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/contents/vaccine-preventable-diseases/rabies-and-other-lyssaviruses>

AUSVETPLAN

For current policy on surveillance and management see AUSVETPLAN - Lyssaviruses:

https://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2021/05/AUSVETPLAN-ResponseStrategy_Lyssaviruses-1.pdf

ABLV BAT STATS



WHA Bat Health Focus Group

This document has been approved by the Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) Bat Health Focus Group. Using a collaborative One Health approach, the Bat Health Focus Group considers bat health issues in relation to the broader context of biosecurity, public health, livestock health and environmental impacts in Australia. Members come from organisations including Australian and State Government departments of agriculture, public health and environment; CSIRO Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, universities, the Australasian Bat Society and the Australian Speleological Federation. Members include veterinarians, biologists, ecologists, virologists, epidemiologists and wildlife/bat carers.

Information sources

This report presents the latest information on ABLV testing across Australia. Information has been made available by CSIRO Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, Janine Barrett PhD thesis 2004 (with permission), QLD Health, zoo & wildlife veterinarians, universities, Wildlife Health Australia members, and State/Territory WHA Coordinators (representatives of Chief Veterinary Officers), and is collated by Wildlife Health Australia. More detailed information is available in the electronic Wildlife Health Information System ([eWHIS](#)).

References

- ¹ Barrett J (2021). Atypical cluster of lyssavirus (ABLV) infections in little red flying foxes in South East Queensland. *Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly*, 26(1), 7-8 <https://www.sciquest.org.nz/browse/publications/article/165925>
- ² Young MK & McCall BJ (2010). Potential exposure to Australian bat lyssavirus in South East Queensland: What has changed in 12 years? *Comm Dis Intell*, 34(3), 334-8 www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cda-cdi3403l.htm
- ³ Field HE (2005). The Ecology of Hendra virus and Australian bat lyssavirus, PhD thesis, The University of Queensland <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:13859>
- ⁴ Barrett J (2004). Australian Bat Lyssavirus, PhD thesis, The University of Queensland <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:9486>
- ⁵ McCall B, Field HE, Smith GA, Storie GJ, Harrower BJ (2005). Defining the risk of human exposure to Australian bat lyssavirus

State/Territory WHA Coordinators

Contact your state/territory department of primary industries/agriculture or WHA Coordinator for more information on ABLV testing, or to report a suspected ABLV infected bat.

Click the below link to find your state or territory WHA Coordinator contact details:
<https://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Incidents/WHA-Coordinator-Contacts>



Little red flying-foxes
Photo: Paislie Hadley via Flickr (CC)