



**National Wildlife Health Center
Wildlife Health Bulletin 2016-02**

**Bat Submission Guidelines for White-Nose Syndrome Investigations in 2016
and Update on Surveillance for *Pseudogymnoascus destructans***

To: Natural Resource/Conservation Managers
From: Dr. Jonathan Sleeman, Center Director, USGS National Wildlife Health Center
Date: February 25, 2016

The USGS National Wildlife Health Center ([NWHC](#)) continues to provide sampling kits for swabbing hibernating bats and their surrounding environment to state wildlife agencies nationwide to assist with early detection of *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (*Pd*), and to address specific research priorities identified by state and federal agency partners in conjunction with the [White-Nose Syndrome National Plan](#). During the first two years of the swab-based surveillance project, which began in the winter of 2013/14, swabs from more than 2,100 bats, representing 16 North American species, and 580 environmental substrates from 110 hibernacula in 23 states were returned to the NWHC for analysis. *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* was detected at 16 hibernacula in six states, including nine sites where there was no physical or behavioral evidence of white-nose syndrome (WNS) observed in the bat population. Nearly all detections of *Pd* originated from swabs collected from bats rather than from environmental substrates collected inside of hibernacula. Information on biotic and abiotic factors continues to be collected at all hibernacula surveyed to assess the potential importance of various parameters in contributing to presence of *Pd*.

The NWHC [Bat Submission Guidelines](#) for WNS surveillance in 2015/2016 were recently updated. These guidelines, which are posted on the NWHC [WNS web page](#), replace all previous NWHC bat submission criteria. Included are reference charts to assist submitters with selecting priority species and appropriate samples for submission to a diagnostic laboratory. A map that designates WNS Management Areas as either within the endemic area, the intermediate area, or the at-risk area is included on page 10. These guidelines support the surveillance objectives of the [WNS National Plan](#) for identifying new geographic locations and bat species impacted by *Pd* and WNS.

In addition to the updated Bat Submission Guidelines, we also remind our partners of the current case definition for [WNS](#) and the [guidelines](#) for safe handling of potentially infectious materials harboring *Pd* established by the WNS Diagnostic Working Group. Guidance on acceptable methods for euthanasia for diagnostic evaluation of WNS in bats is available upon request.

Another reminder to partners involved in surveillance: to confirm WNS in new areas or on bat species not previously known to be infected, please collect and submit carcasses or wing biopsy samples collected under UV illumination for histopathological evaluation (for best diagnostic interpretation, whole carcasses are preferable to wing biopsies). For more details, please refer to the [submission guidelines](#).

NWHC advises delaying entry into bat hibernacula to conduct surveys until mid- to late-winter as fungal infections of hibernating bats generally become more readily detectable as the season progresses. However, please note that disturbing hibernating bats can cause unintended mortality in otherwise healthy bat populations. As an alternative to entering hibernacula, observation of increased bat activity during the hibernation season can be indicative of WNS.

For information on bat surveillance guidelines during spring emergence or to discuss swab-based sampling, please contact Anne Ballmann (aballmann@usgs.gov) at 608-270-2445.

For more information about the interagency response to WNS, please visit: <http://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/>

Disease Investigation Services:

To request diagnostic services or report wildlife mortality, please contact the NWHC at **608-270-2480** or by email at NWHC-epi@usgs.gov, and a field epidemiologist will be available to discuss the case. To report wildlife mortality events in Hawaii or Pacific Island territories, please contact the Honolulu Field Station at 808-792-9520 or email Thierry Work at thierry_work@usgs.gov. Further information can be found at <http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/services/>.

[Wildlife Mortality Reporting and Diagnostic Submission Request Form](#)

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the scientific and technical services we provide, please do not hesitate to contact NWHC Director Jonathan Sleeman at 608-270-2401, jsleeman@usgs.gov.

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WILDLIFE HEALTH BULLETINS are distributed to natural resource/conservation agencies to provide and promote information exchange about significant wildlife health threats. If you would like to be added to or removed from the mailing list for these bulletins, please contact Gail Moede Rogall at 608-270-2438 or e-mail: nwhc-outreach@usgs.gov.