

AVMA MODEL RABIES CONTROL DOCUMENT

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Model Rabies Control Document is intended to serve as a set of guiding principles for those who are now, or will be in the future, preparing or revising pertinent language under the codes and laws of the applicable jurisdiction. The AVMA Model Rabies Document is not intended to supersede statutory language found in such codes and laws of individual states and veterinarians should inquire with their state board of veterinary medicine for information on a specific state's approach to rabies regulations.¹

Section I—Definitions

Animal—Any of the order Mammalia other than humans (*Homo sapiens*) unless otherwise stated below. All members of order Mammalia are capable of being infected with and transmitting rabies.

Animal shelter—A facility that is maintained by either a government entity or a private enterprise which provides contractual services to the jurisdiction for the purpose of impounding or harboring animals.

Bite—Any penetration of the skin by an animal's tooth or teeth.

Cat—Any domestic feline animal (*Felis catus*).

Currently vaccinated against rabies— Vaccination status of an animal that has received a primary rabies vaccine or has received a booster vaccine administered in accordance with the current Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, authored by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians. Rabies vaccination must be performed by or under the direct supervision of a veterinarian who is licensed or legally permitted to practice veterinary medicine in the state.

Dog—Any domestic canine animal (*Canis familiaris*).

Equid—Any member of the domesticated species within the genus *Equus*, including horses (*Equus caballus*), donkeys, burros, and asses (*Equus asinus*), and their hybrid offspring (mules and hinnies).

Exposure—Contact between a susceptible host and a potentially rabid animal that is considered to be sufficient to permit transmission of rabies virus as determined by the rabies control authority upon review of available evidence related to the exposure in question and local epidemiology of rabies.

Ferret—Any domestic ferret animal (*Mustela putorius furo*).

Isolation—Strict confinement of an animal with clinical signs compatible with rabies in a manner that precludes direct contact with other animals not concurrently in isolation or persons other than the owner or caretaker. The isolation shall be conducted under an order issued by the rabies control authority designating the specific place, manner, and provisions of the isolation.

¹ Portions of this document are based in part on the most recent edition of the NASPHV Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control (2016). Future versions of this document should consider updated information in new editions of the Compendium."

Livestock—Any hooved mammals raised for sustenance, companionship, show, or profit.

Non-bite exposure—Instance where saliva from an animal has come in contact with an open wound or a mucous membrane.

Owner—A person having the right of property or custody of an animal or who keeps, harbors or feeds an animal or knowingly permits an animal to remain on or about any premises occupied by that person. This term shall not apply to veterinarians or operators of licensed kennels, stables, or other facilities who have temporary custody of animals owned by others.

Quarantine— Strict confinement of an animal exposed or potentially exposed to rabies or an animal that has bitten a person. Quarantined animals should be confined in a manner that precludes direct contact with other animals not concurrently in quarantine or persons other than the owner or caretaker. The quarantine shall be conducted under an order issued by the rabies control authority designating the specific place, manner, and provisions of the quarantine.

Rabies control authority—A government agency or persons who are legally authorized and responsible for enforcement of this document.

Rabies vector species—Any wild or domestic mammal determined by the rabies control authority to be a likely rabies vector based on local epizootiology. Wild rabies vector species include (but are not limited to) bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes and mongooses. Domestic rabies vector species include (but are not limited to) dogs, cats, and ferrets.

Section II—Rabies Vaccination Requirements

A. Initial Vaccination

Effective _____, in the applicable jurisdiction of _____, the owner of every dog, cat, or ferret 3 months of age or older or equid 6 months of age or older shall have the animal vaccinated against rabies. Vaccination at a younger age should be in accordance with the labels of USDA-licensed rabies vaccines. Unvaccinated dogs, cats, or ferrets more than 3 months of age that are acquired or moved into the applicable jurisdiction must be vaccinated within 30 days of purchase or arrival unless there is documented evidence of current vaccination.

B. Revaccination

The owner of every dog, cat, ferret, or equid shall have the animal revaccinated 12 months after the initial vaccination. Thereafter, the interval between revaccinations should conform to the manufacturer's product labeling and the interval of _____ which conforms to the laws and regulations of this jurisdiction.

Section III—Duties

A. Duties of Licensed Veterinarian

It shall be the duty of each licensed veterinarian, when vaccinating any animal to complete a certificate of rabies vaccination for each animal that is vaccinated. The certificate shall at a minimum include the following information:

1. Owner's name, address, and telephone number.
2. Description of the dog, cat, ferret, or equid (species, breed, sex, markings, age, and name).
3. Date of vaccination.
4. Date of vaccination expiration.
5. Rabies vaccination tag number.
6. Vaccine producer and product name.
7. Manufacturer's serial or lot number of vaccine.
8. Veterinarian's signature or stamp.
9. Veterinarian's address and license number.
10. Microchip number, if applicable.

The original certificate of rabies vaccination shall be provided to the owner. The veterinarian who administers the vaccination shall retain a copy, and make copies available to the rabies control authority as required by law. All parties should retain the certificate for the duration of the vaccination plus 1 year. A durable metal or plastic series-numbered rabies tag issued by the rabies control authority may be provided to the owner with instructions to comply with subsection B below regarding the tag's display.

B. Duties of Owner

The owner is responsible for procuring rabies vaccination for their dog, cat, ferret or equid as outlined above and for securing a license as required by local or state government. The owner is responsible for ensuring their dog, cat, or ferret wears a collar or harness with identification and the approved license or rabies tag securely attached. The license or rabies tag may be required to be worn at all times unless specific exemptions are set forth in the local ordinance.

Section IV—Transient or Show Dogs, Cats, or Ferrets

Owners of animals who are temporarily visiting a specific rabies control jurisdiction with their animals or who are exhibiting an animal in competition must carry with them and be prepared, upon demand of a legal authority, to present a current certificate of rabies vaccination for each dog, cat, or ferret.

Section V—Post-Exposure Management

This section refers to any animal exposed to a confirmed or suspected rabid animal. Wild mammalian carnivores or bats that are not available or suitable for testing should be regarded as rabid animals.

A. Dogs, Cats, and Ferrets

Any illness in an exposed animal should be reported immediately to the rabies control authority. If signs suggestive of rabies develop (e.g., paralysis or seizures), the animal should be euthanized and decapitated and the head shipped by approved methods to a laboratory that has been designated by the rabies control authority for testing.

1. Dogs, cat and ferrets that have been potentially exposed to rabies and are current on rabies vaccination should immediately receive veterinary medical care for assessment, wound cleansing, and be revaccinated. The animal should be kept under the owner's control and observed for a minimum of 45 days.
2. Dogs and cats that have been potentially exposed to rabies and are overdue for a booster vaccination and have appropriate documentation of having received a USDA-licensed rabies vaccine at least once previously should immediately receive veterinary medical care for assessment, wound cleansing and booster vaccination. The animal should be kept under the owner's control and observed for a minimum of 45 days. If booster vaccination is delayed, the rabies control authority may consider increasing the observation period for the animal, taking into consideration factors such as the severity of the exposure, the length of the delay in booster vaccination, current health status, and local rabies epidemiology.
3. Ferrets that have been potentially exposed to rabies and are overdue for a booster vaccination should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration factors such as the severity of exposure, time elapsed since last vaccination, number of previous vaccinations, current health status, and local rabies epidemiology, to determine need for euthanasia or immediate booster vaccination followed by observation or quarantine.
4. Dogs and cats that have been potentially exposed to rabies and are overdue for a booster rabies vaccination and without appropriate documentation of a prior USDA-licensed rabies vaccination should immediately receive veterinary medical care for assessment, wound cleansing, and consultation with the rabies control authority. The animal can be treated as unvaccinated, immediately given a booster vaccination, and placed in quarantine. Alternatively, prior to booster rabies vaccination, the attending veterinarian may request guidance from the rabies control authority in the possible use of prospective serologic monitoring.
5. Dogs, cats, and ferrets that have been potentially exposed to rabies and have never been vaccinated should be euthanized immediately. If the owner is unwilling to have the animal euthanized, the animal should be placed in quarantine for a minimum of 4 months (dogs

and cats) or for 6 months (ferrets) (provided that the animal remains asymptomatic and subject to approval of the rabies control authority). Rabies vaccine should be administered at the time of entry into quarantine to bring the animal up to current rabies vaccination status. However, there is evidence that the use of vaccine alone will not reliably prevent the disease in these animals. There are currently no USDA-licensed biologics for post-exposure prophylaxis of previously unvaccinated domestic animals.

B. Livestock

All species of livestock are susceptible to rabies; cattle and equids are the most frequently reported infected species. Any illness in an exposed animal should be reported immediately to the rabies control authority. If signs suggestive of rabies develop, the animal should be euthanized, laboratory testing arranged, and the head shipped for testing.

1. Unvaccinated livestock should be euthanized immediately. If the animal is not euthanized, it should be confined and observed on a case-by-case basis for 6 months. Vaccination during this confinement period may be considered depending on the intended use of the animal and subject to the approval of the rabies control authority.
2. Livestock that are current on rabies vaccination with a USDA-licensed vaccine approved for that species should be revaccinated immediately and observed for 45 days.
3. Livestock overdue for a booster rabies vaccination should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration factors such as severity of exposure, time elapsed since last vaccination, number of previous vaccinations, current health status, and local rabies epidemiology, to determine the need for euthanasia or immediate booster vaccination followed by observation or strict quarantine.
4. Multiple rabid animals in a herd or herbivore-to-herbivore transmission are uncommon; therefore, restricting the rest of the herd if a single animal has been exposed to or infected by rabies is usually not necessary.
5. Rabies virus is widely distributed in the tissues of rabid animals. Tissues and products from a rabid animal should not be used for human or animal consumption or transplantation. Pasteurization and cooking will inactivate rabies virus; therefore, inadvertently drinking pasteurized milk or eating animal products cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature according to [USDA](#) does not constitute a rabies exposure.
6. Handling and consumption of uncooked tissues from exposed animals might carry a risk for rabies transmission. Persons handling exposed animals, carcasses, and tissues should exercise caution and don appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent percutaneous or mucous membrane exposure. State and local public health authorities, state meat inspectors, and the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service should be notified if exposures occur in animals intended for commercial use. Animals should not be presented for slaughter in a USDA-regulated establishment if such animals originate from a confinement area and have not been approved for release by the rabies control authority. If an exposed animal is to be custom or home slaughtered for consumption, it should be slaughtered immediately after exposure, and all tissues should be cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature according to [USDA](#).

C. Other Animals

Other mammals exposed to a rabid animal should be euthanized immediately. Animals maintained in USDA-licensed research facilities or accredited zoological park should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the rabies control authority. Management options may include quarantine, observation, and administration of rabies biologics.

Section VI—Management of Animals that Expose Humans

A. Dogs, Cats, and Ferrets

Rabies virus is excreted in the saliva of infected dogs, cats, and ferrets during illness or for only a few days before illness or death. Regardless of rabies vaccination status, a healthy dog, cat, or ferret that exposes a person should be confined and observed daily for 10 days from the time of the exposure as defined by the rabies control authority; administration of rabies vaccine to the animal is not recommended during the observation period to avoid confusing signs of rabies with rare adverse reactions. Any illness in the animal should be reported immediately to the rabies control authority. Such animals should be evaluated by a veterinarian at the first sign of illness during confinement. If clinical signs suggestive of rabies develop, the animal should be euthanized and the head submitted for testing. Any dog, cat, or ferret for which the owner cannot be identified that exposes a person may be euthanized immediately, if approved by the rabies control authority, and the head submitted for rabies examination.

B. Other Animals

Other animals that might have exposed a person to rabies should be reported immediately to the rabies control authority. Management of animals other than dogs, cats, and ferrets depends on the species, the circumstances of the exposure, the epidemiology of rabies in the area, the exposing animal's history, current health status, and the animal's potential for exposure to rabies. The shedding period for rabies virus is undetermined for most species. Previous vaccination of these animals might not preclude the necessity for euthanasia and testing.

Section VII—Testing of Suspect Rabid Animals

Dogs, cats and ferrets that have bitten or otherwise exposed a human and that die, are euthanized or develop signs suggestive of rabies before a 10 day observation period can be completed shall be tested for rabies at a laboratory designated by the rabies control authority, regardless of the animal's rabies vaccination status at the time of the exposure.

Any rabies vector species that has bitten or otherwise exposed dogs, cats, ferrets, or livestock animals shall be tested for rabies at a laboratory designated by the rabies control authority.

The bitten or exposed animal shall be quarantined until the test results are available. If the test results are negative, the quarantined animal shall be released with the approval of the rabies control authority. If the rabies suspect is not available for testing, the duration of quarantine shall be determined by the rabies control authority.

Euthanasia or dispatch of animals intended for rabies testing should be completed using methods recommended by the rabies control authority and that spare brain tissue necessary for testing.

Section VIII—Impoundment of Animals Found in Violation of This Code

- A. The rabies control authority shall operate a shelter or shelters, or the rabies control authority may enter into cooperative agreements with a licensed veterinarian or other organization for the establishment and operation of an isolation or quarantine facility.
- B. In addition to vaccination, limiting stray dog activity is key to rabies control. Therefore any animal that is found off the owner's premises at large may be impounded. All impounded animals shall be given proper care and maintenance.
- C. Notice of impoundment of all animals, including any relevant identification marks, shall be posted at the shelter as public notification of impoundment.
- D. An owner may reclaim a rabies vaccinated animal by furnishing proof of rabies vaccination and paying all impoundment and licensing fees prior to release.
- E. An owner may reclaim an unvaccinated animal during the period of impoundment by paying the prescribed shelter and vaccination fees of \$_____. A rabies vaccination must be administered prior to or within __ hours after release; arrangements will be made by the local government to reimburse the rabies vaccination fee to a veterinarian designated by the owner after receipt of proof of vaccination.
- F. Any animal that is unclaimed shall be subject to disposition as determined by the applicable jurisdiction in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The jurisdiction may decide whether the animal becomes its property and if so, at what time.

Section IX—Penalties for Violation of Ordinance

Any owner who fails to comply with any of the provisions of this ordinance shall be issued a citation and subject to a fine of not less than \$_____ and not more than \$_____.

Section X—Shelter Fees

The rabies control authority may require that fees for impoundment, quarantine, specimen collection, specimen shipping and rabies testing be paid by the owner of the biting animal where applicable.

Section XI— Enforcement

- A. It shall be the responsibility of the _____ to administer this ordinance, and to promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its implementation.
- B. Enforcement shall be the responsibility of _____.
- C. Effective _____ in the (county, city, town, or village) of _____, all regulations pertaining to rabies control (and licensing) will be enforced by the (state, county, or local) enforcement officers or others with regulatory authority specified by the governing unit.

Explanatory Notes

Communities that require licensure of dogs or cats may insert the following sections in the ordinance:

Licensing

Effective _____ in the (county, city, town, or village) of _____, every dog or cat 3 months of age and older shall be licensed. On proof of rabies vaccination in accordance with Section II of this ordinance and upon application for licensure and payment of the required fee to the (county, city, town, or village) clerk of _____, a license shall be issued. All licenses will expire _____ and each year thereafter.

Fees

Annual license fees shall be as follows:

Male (sexually intact)	\$ _____
Male (neutered)	\$ _____
Female (sexually intact)	\$ _____
Female (neutered)	\$ _____

NOTE: Upon the recommendation of a licensed veterinarian, rabies vaccinations may be administered for animal species other than those for which a USDA-licensed vaccine is available; however, a current vaccination history may not eliminate the requirement for euthanasia and rabies testing if the animal bites a human. Owners of animals receiving extralabel rabies vaccination should be so advised by the veterinarian that administers the vaccine.

For more information regarding rabies prevention and control, please go to <http://www.nasphv.org/documentsCompendia.html>.