

Lee County, Florida Rabies Quarantine Guidelines for Dogs, Cats & Ferrets

CHD=County Health Department (Epidemiology: 239-332-9580)

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies/documents/rabiesguide2014final2.pdf>

Rabies exposure: any bite, scratch, or other situation in which saliva, cerebral spinal fluid, tears, or nervous tissue from a suspect or known rabid animal or person enters an open wound, is transplanted into, or comes in contact with mucous membranes of another animal or person. Scratches from moderate or high risk animals with exposure risk (cats) are considered a potential rabies exposure.

High-Risk Animals: Any exposure inflicted by a raccoon, bat, skunk, coyote, fox, otter, or bobcat, or by a stray dog, cat, or ferret should be considered as high risk for rabies infection in Florida. Any wild animal in this group should be considered highly suspect regardless of its health or behavior status. Face and neck bites caused by unvaccinated pet dogs, cats, or ferrets with a history of potential rabies exposure should also be regarded as high risk.

Moderate-Risk Animals: Other exposures inflicted by unvaccinated dogs or ferrets maintained as pets should be considered to be moderate risk for rabies infection in Florida.

Low-Risk Animals: Provoked exposures inflicted by pet rats, mice, hamsters, guinea pigs, hedgehogs, domestic rabbits, and immunized dogs, cats, and ferrets are considered to be very low risk for rabies infection.

Animal Vaccination Status Requirements: vaccinations for rabies must be documented, current (within the advertised duration of the vaccine, one, or three years) and veterinarian-administered. An animal is considered currently vaccinated if it has received its' primary vaccination in accordance with the guidelines of the Florida Rabies Compendium at least 28 days prior to the rabies exposure incident. Because a rapid anamnestic response is expected, an animal is considered currently vaccinated immediately after a booster vaccination. **Titers are NOT acceptable in lieu of revaccination.**

DOGS, CATS OR FERRETS EXPOSES A HUMAN

Dogs, cats, and ferrets should be captured alive and confined for a period of 10 days from the time of the bite. Unvaccinated domestic animals with a history of a potential rabies exposure that cause moderate to severe face or neck bites to a person, should be immediately tested. If confinement of the animal is not possible or practical, the animal can be euthanized and its brain submitted for laboratory examination at the owner's expense. If the animal is unvaccinated and at moderate risk for rabies, the 10-day observation is recommended in a city or county animal shelter or at a licensed veterinary clinic having recognized isolation procedures, at the owner's expense. Any abnormal behavior or sign of rabies must be reported immediately to the investigating officer. **The animal must be vaccinated against rabies at the owner's expense by a licensed veterinarian following termination of the observation period.** Animals can be released from the isolation and observation period status only upon approval of the CHD director/administrator or designee.

ANIMAL EXPOSES A VACCINATED ANIMAL

Dog, Cat, Ferret: Currently vaccinated animals exposed to a known or suspected rabid animal shall be revaccinated immediately by a licensed veterinarian and quarantined for 45 days in a place approved by the CHD director/administrator or designee (or euthanized if the pet owner elects). Dogs shall be leashed and muzzled when taken outdoors, or restricted by fencing from exposure to others and pets of others. Cats and ferrets must be quarantined indoors. Any illness must be evaluated by a licensed veterinarian on premise and, if considered possibly rabid, reported immediately to the CHD.

It is the owner's responsibility to produce documentation of current rabies vaccination by a licensed veterinarian. **In the absence of proof, the animal should be considered unvaccinated. Owner-administered vaccinations are not considered valid.**

ANIMAL EXPOSES AN UNVACCINATED ANIMAL

Unvaccinated Dog, Cat or Ferret: Any dog, cat, or ferret not currently vaccinated that is exposed to a known or suspected rabid animal shall be euthanized or, if the owner desires, placed under rabies quarantine for six months (at the owner's expense) in a place approved by the CHD director/administrator or designee with no contact from other animals and reduced contact with people. At a minimum, CHD staff or animal control officers should inspect the animal on a weekly basis for eight weeks, then monthly, unless the animal exhibits signs or symptoms of rabies. If the owner declines to euthanize an animal with no documentation of ever having received rabies vaccination, the animal should be vaccinated upon entry into quarantine **OR** 30 days before being released from quarantine to comply with pre-exposure vaccination recommendations. If the owner declines to euthanize an animal designated unvaccinated because they are overdue for vaccination at the time of exposure, the animal should be boosted immediately on entry into quarantine.

If the dog, cat, or ferret is killed or dies within the quarantine period and there is a potential for human exposure, the head must be detached from the body without mutilation, properly cooled, and forwarded to the closest DOH BPHL for rabies testing.