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I. NEW JERSEY STATE LAW

New Jersey Revised Statutes 26:4-78 states that: "Whenever a dog, cat or other animal is affected by rabies or suspected of being affected by rabies or has been bitten by an animal known or suspected to be affected by rabies, the owner or person in charge of the animal or any person having knowledge thereof, shall forthwith notify the local board having jurisdiction of the place where the animal is located. The notification shall be in writing, signed by the person making the same and shall state where the animal may be found."

II. VETERINARIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

If a practitioner determines that an animal is displaying clinical signs of rabies, he or she must make a report to the local health department (LHD) where the animal is currently being housed. A complete history should be taken from the owner of the animal including vaccination status, history of wounds, contact with wildlife, onset of symptoms and the names of people who have been bitten by the animal or may have had nonbite exposures (saliva from the animal contaminating an open wound or mucous membrane) within 10 days of the onset of illness. Although this report can initially be made via telephone, a written report should also be either mailed or faxed to the LHD.

If the owner consents to have the animal euthanized, the veterinarian should decapitate and store the head under refrigeration until it is delivered to the State laboratory for rabies testing. APPENDIX VII contains complete guidelines for decapitation and specimen submission. A copy of this document is available from LHDs or the NJDOH.

If the animal is not euthanized, it is recommended that it be hospitalized and observed. Precautions should be taken to prevent bites or exposures by isolating the animal, limiting staff contact and wearing gloves and eye protection whenever the animal must be handled. If the animal does have rabies, its' condition will deteriorate rapidly, with death usually occurring within 5 days of onset. If the owners refuse to hospitalize the animal, immediately notify the LHD.

The veterinarian should report all known or suspected human bites or exposures to a suspect rabid animal and refer all questions concerning human treatment to the LHD. On nights, weekends, and holidays, the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES), 800-962-1253, provides human rabies exposure consultations on a 24 hour basis.

III. PREPARATION OF SPECIMENS FOR SUBMISSION

After the animal dies or is euthanized, the veterinarian should properly package the specimen in a bag which is closed to prevent leakage and then placed in a watertight container with coolant packs. If the animal is 2 pounds or larger, only the head will be accepted for examination. Only the brain will be accepted from horses and cattle. The head should not be frozen. A Rabies