



April 27, 2020

Essential Animal Rabies Vaccinations and Animal Licensing Guidance During the COVID-19 Pandemic and State of Emergency

Rabies vaccination of pets is an essential component to rabies prevention and is a necessary step to ensure the protection of the citizens of New Jersey from potential rabies exposures from their pets. During this State of Emergency, it is vital to provide rabies vaccinations to pets in a manner that is safe to pet owners or handlers and the veterinarians administering the vaccine as well as any other individuals involved in the process.

Due to the number of New Jersey residents out of work during this crisis, free municipal rabies vaccination clinics may be the only means in which some pet owners will be able to obtain a rabies vaccine for their pets. Rabies vaccines shall be administered only by a licensed veterinarian and shall not be administered by any other individual, including pet owners.

Municipal rabies vaccination clinics may be postponed but should be rescheduled as soon as possible. Animal licensing periods should be extended during this time since pet owners are unable to obtain a rabies vaccine due to the cancellation of municipal rabies vaccination clinics, and some veterinarians and low-cost veterinary service providers are not providing routine vaccination services at this time. The stay at home order and isolation, quarantine, and hospitalization of New Jersey residents has also resulted in the inability to obtain rabies vaccines for pets, which is a prerequisite to licensing.

Municipal officials should work with the contracting veterinarian and OEM to plan a rabies vaccination clinic that can be held with limited risk to residents and staff. This may be done through scheduling individual appointments or requiring residents to remain in their vehicles until called on an individual basis, or by other means. Staff shall wear appropriate PPE and ensure that social distancing (a minimum of 6 feet) is maintained except for the brief direct exchange of the pet between the owner or animal handler and veterinarian. Residents shall wear appropriate face masks during the clinic. Hand washing stations or hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol shall be available and used frequently. Steps shall be taken to regularly clean and disinfect frequent touch surfaces and other preventive measures shall be maintained as advised by CDC to prevent disease transmission.

Dogs should be restrained with a non-retractable 6-foot leash or other safe control to allow a quick and unimpeded transfer to the veterinarian for vaccination. Cats should be transported in suitable carriers or containers to prevent escape. To avoid delay and unnecessary risks, rabies vaccination certificates can be handed to the passengers in the vehicle to be filled out with the owner's information and animal description, or the certificate can be filled out with the information obtained when making an appointment for vaccination, but the original document must be signed by the licensed veterinarian at

the time the vaccine is administered. If pet owners or passengers will be filling out the certificates, they should be instructed to bring a pen. Pens shall not be passed from one vehicle or individual to another. The rabies vaccination certificate may be filled out and printed at the link below, but again, the original document must be signed by the licensed veterinarian at the time the rabies vaccine is administered to the animal. The description of the animal on the prefilled certificate must match the animal being vaccinated.

Municipalities that have received and are currently holding vaccine but have cancelled clinics shall check the expiration date on the product to ensure it will not expire before the clinic is rescheduled. Vaccine lot number 12644 expires on May 10, 2020. If you have this lot number, please hold the vaccine, or return to the County distribution center for possible exchange, pending approval from the product manufacturer. Do not use rabies vaccine past the product's expiration date.

If you have any questions regarding municipal rabies vaccination clinics, please contact Linda Frese or Dr. Patricia Zinna by email at Linda.Frese@doh.nj.gov or Patricia.Zinna@doh.nj.gov or by phone at 609-826-4872. Please see the links below for the rabies vaccination certificate, the duration of immunity for 3-year rabies vaccine products, and the link to NJDOH VPH website for additional information on rabies.

<http://healthapps.state.nj.us/forms/index.aspx#vph-26>

https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/duration_of_immunity_nov2016.pdf

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/rabies.shtml>