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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Rabies Frequently Asked Questions for Veterinarians

Vaccination and Dog Licensing

Does MDARD accept rabies titers instead of rabies vaccinations?

No, state law does not allow rabies titers to be used as a substitute for rabies vaccinations for ferrets and dogs. Rabies vaccination titers are indicative of a response to a vaccine; they do not correlate with protection, as there are many factors affecting immunity. In addition, the [Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control](#) advises against using rabies titers as a substitute for rabies vaccination.

Do I have to be USDA Accredited to sign a rabies certificate for a dog?

Yes, veterinarians must be accredited to sign a rabies certificate. Under state law, specifically the Dog Law (Act 339 of 1919), all dogs must be vaccinated against rabies and licensed by six months of age. In this law it states that to apply for an individual dog license, a dog owner must present a rabies certificate, signed by a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Accredited Veterinarian.

Who oversees dog licensing?

Dog licensing, including the issuance of dog license tags, is overseen at the local level, often by the township, city, or county treasurer, city clerk, or local animal control agency.

What if a veterinarian has vaccinated dogs while unaccredited?

On occasion, MDARD encounters Michigan veterinarians who are unaware of this law and have issued rabies certificates without being accredited. When this happens, MDARD advises those veterinarians to become accredited as soon as possible. Initial accreditation training can be completed online and then veterinarians must attend a one-time, in-person orientation class, which is held quarterly. For more information on accreditation, visit the [USDA's website](#) or contact the USDA's Michigan office at 517-337-4701. Dogs vaccinated prior to the veterinarian becoming accredited do not need to be revaccinated.

Can a USDA accredited veterinarian supervise the vaccination of a dog?

Accredited veterinarians can supervise rabies vaccinations performed by licensed, non-accredited Michigan veterinarians and licensed veterinary technicians. The supervising accredited veterinarian must examine the dog prior to the vaccination, closely supervise the vaccination, and sign the rabies certificate. The accredited veterinarian performing the examination does not need to be the same accredited veterinarian that supervises vaccination.

Do I have to be USDA accredited to administer a rabies vaccine to a ferret or cat?

No, you only have to be accredited to administer a rabies vaccination to a dog. While state law requires all ferrets over 12 weeks of age to be vaccinated against rabies by a veterinarian, state law does not require ferrets to be vaccinated by an accredited veterinarian. No other animals are required to be vaccinated against rabies under Michigan law.

Is it required to issue a rabies certificate or rabies vaccination tag when vaccinating an animal against rabies?

A veterinarian is required to issue a rabies certificate for ferrets and dogs and is advised to issue a rabies certificate for other animals. A veterinarian is not required to issue rabies vaccination tags.

What information should a rabies certificate include?

It is recommended that a rabies certificates include the veterinarian's accreditation number and the information recommended in the [National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians' model rabies certificate \(fillable PDF example\)](#).

Can a veterinarian use a stamped signature on a rabies certificate?

A veterinarian or their staff may use a stamped signature provided that the veterinarian has approved this. It is up to the veterinarian to secure the stamp and to ensure that no unauthorized use occurs.

How should vaccines be administered, and which ones are approved?

It is advised that rabies vaccines be used in accordance with the manufacturer's label and guidance. Only USDA-approved rabies vaccinations can be used for licensing. A list of approved vaccines can be found on [the last two pages of the 2016 version of the Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control](#). State law allows the use of both the one-year and three-year rabies vaccines.

Testing and Exposure

Where do I submit specimens?

In Michigan, rabies testing is performed at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Laboratory. The laboratory offers rabies testing and specimen submittal kits, at no charge. Kits can be ordered by completing and submitting a [Clinical Specimen Shipping Units Requisition](#) form or by calling 517-335-9040. The rabies testing submittal form and submission instructions for MDHHS can be [found online](#).

Wildlife species with neurologic signs that have not exposed any people or domestic animals to rabies are submitted by the public to their local Department of Natural (DNR) Resources field office. The animal must be deceased when submitted. The DNR will forward samples to USDA Wildlife Services for rabies testing. If the animal is negative for rabies, DNR may conduct further testing to look for other causes. All testing is done free of charge. For more information, contact DNR at 517-336-5030 or USDA at 517-336-1928.

Does MDARD pick up samples for rabies testing?

MDARD staff may collect livestock heads for processing that are too large for the rabies submittal kits, **only if resources allow**. Contact MDARD to request this assistance.

An animal or person may have been exposed, now what?

Follow the rabies flowcharts found at <http://www.michigan.gov/rabies> under "Guidance Documents and Educational Materials." There are instructions for both [human](#) and [animal exposure](#). **Animal bites must be reported to the local health department within 24 hours of the bite.**

Response and Monitoring

What is serologic monitoring?

Serologic monitoring is a series of tests performed on dogs and cats that may have been exposed to a rabid animal and are believed to have had a prior rabies vaccination, but do not have official proof of vaccination. This series of blood draws can help evaluate if the animal has been vaccinated before by determining if the animal develops strong anamnestic response. Testing should occur as soon as possible after an exposure, and the animal must not be vaccinated against rabies until the first blood sample is collected. The owner is responsible for the cost of testing. Testing can take several weeks, and animals pending testing are to be strictly quarantined during this time. For more information on serologic monitoring, see the [National Association of Public Health Veterinarians guidance](#).

What is a "strict quarantine?"

The following is advised for animal owners when quarantining an animal for rabies:

- Keep the animal isolated away from other animals and people, aside from caregivers. The animal is advised to be kept indoors, ensuring there is a double barrier between the animal and the outdoors (i.e., two doors).
- The animal must not leave the premises unless seeking emergency veterinary care or evacuating for an emergency (e.g., premises fire, premises flooding, etc.).
- Do not share items between the quarantined animal and other animals. If the item is made of non-absorbent materials, it can be shared after it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- The animal may go outdoors if kept under the control of the owner or caretaker (i.e., leash walked), kept to the quarantined premises, and kept away from other people and animals.
- Observe the animal daily for signs of rabies. If signs are seen, the veterinarian is to be promptly contacted.

There may be local requirements (county, city, township) associated with quarantines also, so it is important to contact them as well.