



State of Utah

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October 18, 2018

Utah Animal Control Facilities  
Utah Local Health Departments

**RE: Recommendations for quarantine of domestic animals potentially exposed to rabies**

Dear Animal Control Officer:

Every potential rabies exposure is a different scenario making it difficult to plan a response for every situation that involves rabies. One of the major issues, home confinement for animals that bite humans and/or other animals, has reached a point that guidance from the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) has been requested.

**Background.** The definition of “domestic” as it is referred in this document shall be “a dog, cat or ferret.” Animal bites fall into four categories listed below. Depending on the vaccine status of the domestic animal, different quarantine scenarios may apply to each category:

1. *A domestic animal bites another domestic animal.* Although this issue is not specifically addressed in the “Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, 2016” by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV), which is the basis for the Utah Rabies Rule (R386-702-6), a biting animal may be considered a suspect on a case-by-case situation and the 2016 Compendium addresses any animal exposed to a suspected rabid animal. See Part B. Prevention and Control Methods in Domestic and Confined Animals, 5. Post exposure management. This section refers to any animal exposed (*see* Part I. A. 2. Rabies virus exposure) to a confirmed or suspected rabid animal.
2. *A domestic animal bites a human.* Regardless of vaccine status, the animal must be quarantined for 10 days. At the end of the 10 days, if the animal is free of signs that resemble rabies, the bite victim does not need to receive post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).
3. *A wild animal bites domestic animal.* Wild animals with a potential to be infected with rabies must be considered rabid if they are not available for rabies testing. Ideally, if a wild animal bites a domestic animal, the wild animal would be euthanized and the head

shipped to the Utah Public Health Laboratory (UPHL) for testing. If the wild animal is found to be positive or is unable to be captured and:

- a. If the domestic animal is currently vaccinated, it will receive a booster and kept under the owner's control for 45 days.
  - b. If the animal is not vaccinated or has vaccine that has lapsed longer than one year, the animal must be either euthanized or kept in strict isolation for four (dogs and cats) or six (ferrets) months.
4. *A wild animal bites a human.* Rabies strains are commonly found in wild animals such as raccoons, skunks, foxes, and bats. Wild animals and wild animal hybrids should not be kept as pets. Currently, there is no rabies vaccine licensed for use in wild animals or wild animal hybrids. Even if a wild animal is given a rabies vaccine, there is not enough evidence to assume that the wild animal is protected against rabies. If the animal is able to be captured, it should be euthanized immediately and the head be shipped to UPHL for testing.

**Issue of Quarantine of Domestic Animals.** The issue of whether or not the animal can be in confinement under owner's supervision (home) versus at the Animal Control Facility requires additional clarification. The risk of rabies transmission and costs incurred by the local Animal Control Facility and by the owner are important considerations. If the owner complies with certain recommendations (listed below), it is the position of UDOH and UDAF that in most situations, animals that fall into the 10- and 45- day quarantine scenarios can be quarantined at the owner's home. Animals that fall under the four month or six month quarantines should be quarantined under strict isolation in a municipal or county animal shelter or a veterinary medical facility that has been approved by the local health department as defined in the Utah Rabies Rule R386-702-6(2)(j). The quarantine shall be at the owner's expense. Strict isolation is defined in the 2016 NASPHV rabies compendium as "confinement in an enclosure that precludes direct contact with people and other animals."

**Guidance from UDOH and UDAF.** UDOH and UDAF propose the following criteria for approval of home quarantine:

1. If a domestic animal bites another domestic animal, these animals need not be quarantined. This recommendation is based on the current epidemiology of rabies in Utah. No cases of rabies have been identified in domestic animals in Utah since 1995. This recommendation will be revisited if this epidemiology changes.
2. When quarantine is required, this can be done in the animal owner's home provided the owner is forthcoming with all requested information and compliant with the quarantine requirements.
3. Home quarantine will not be approved for an owner with past issues of non-compliance or if s/he appears hostile or unreliable or is not forthcoming with requested information.
4. During 10-day quarantines, the animal must NOT be vaccinated prior to confinement. If home quarantine is approved, Animal Control will check on the animal's status at a minimum on day 5 and day 10. If the animal is symptom free at the end of the quarantine period, the bite victim does not need to receive PEP. Vaccine status of the

animal should be assessed, and it should be vaccinated upon release if the status is not current or unvaccinated.

5. If a currently vaccinated domestic animal is bitten by a wild animal that tests positive for rabies or is unable to be captured for testing, the animal will receive a booster and be held under the owner's control for 45 days. Animal Control will check on the status of the animal at a minimum during the first week of confinement and at the end of the 45 days. During this 45-day quarantine the owner may normally interact with the animal, but contact with other animals and people should be avoided.
6. If a domestic animal with an unvaccinated vaccination status is bitten by a wild animal that tests positive for rabies or is unable to be captured for testing, the animal must either be euthanized or placed in strict isolation for four (dogs and cats) and six (ferrets) months. This quarantine must be performed by Animal Control or in a veterinary office with proper facilities. The animal should be vaccinated prior to confinement to protect against other possible rabies exposures.
7. Animals overdue for a booster vaccination should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis based upon 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 revaccination and observation/isolation.
8. On all quarantines, if the animal becomes sick, the animal must be euthanized and the head sent for testing for rabies at UPHL. If the animal dies, the head must be sent for testing for rabies as well.

For questions regarding these guidelines, please contact the Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology at 801-538-6191 or the Department of Agriculture and Food at 801-538-7161.

Sincerely,



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