

## **Animal Vaccination Protocols**

Public Health laws in Alabama (Section 3-7A of the Code of Alabama 1975) mandate that parenteral animal rabies vaccines can be administered only by a licensed veterinarian. This is to ensure accountability and assurance that the animal has been properly vaccinated. An animal is considered currently vaccinated if the primary vaccination was administered by a licensed veterinarian at least 28 days previously. Regardless of the age of the animal at initial vaccination, a second vaccination should be administered 1 year later. Because a rapid anamnestic (memory) response is expected, an animal is considered currently vaccinated immediately after a booster vaccination.

- **Dogs, Cats, and Ferrets**

All dogs, cats and ferrets are required by Alabama Law to be vaccinated against rabies. They should be vaccinated in accordance with the Code of the Alabama, Title 3. If a previously vaccinated animal is overdue for a booster, it should be revaccinated with a single dose of vaccine and placed on an interval in accordance with the vaccine's label.

- **Livestock**

Vaccinating all livestock against rabies is neither economically feasible nor justified from a public health standpoint. However, strong consideration should be given to vaccinating livestock that are particularly valuable or that might have frequent contact with humans, such as show animals or those in petting zoos. (For specific vaccines licensed for use in livestock, please see the Currently FDA Licensed Rabies Vaccines Section on page 43 of this Manual.) It is recommended that horses traveling interstate or with significant public contact (riding stables, etc.) should be currently vaccinated against rabies.

- **Other Animals**

- **Wild Animals**

No parenteral rabies vaccine is licensed for use in wild animals; therefore the ADPH does not recommend any wild animal be immunized against rabies. Additionally, because of the risk of rabies in wild animals (especially raccoons, skunks, coyotes, foxes, and bats), the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has rigid regulations which prohibit the ownership of wild and wild/domestic hybrids as pets. For further information, please see [www.dcnr.alabama.gov](http://www.dcnr.alabama.gov)

- **Maintained in Exhibits and in Zoological Parks**

Captive animals that are not completely excluded from all contact with rabies vectors can become infected with rabies. Moreover, wild animals might be incubating rabies when initially captured; therefore, wild-caught animals susceptible to rabies should be placed in strict isolation for a minimum of 6 months before being exhibited. Employees who work with animals at such facilities should consider pre-exposure vaccination prophylaxis. The use of pre- or post-exposure rabies vaccinations for employees who work with animals at

such facilities might reduce the need for euthanasia of captive animals. Carnivores and bats should be housed in a manner that precludes direct contact with the public.

## **Management of Animals Exposed to Rabies**

Any animal potentially exposed to rabies virus by a wild, carnivorous mammal or a bat that is not available for testing should be regarded as having been exposed to rabies, and should be reported to the Alabama Department of Public Health.

### **Dogs, Cats, and Ferrets**

- **Unvaccinated** dogs, cats, and ferrets exposed to a known rabid animal are recommended to be euthanized immediately. If the owner is unwilling to have this done, the animal must be placed in strict isolation for 6 months and vaccinated either upon entry to isolation OR one month prior to release. Animals with expired vaccinations need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Strict isolation should be conducted under the authority of the county health department in which the place, manner, and provisions of the confinement are specified. At the first sign of illness or behavioral change in the animal, the county health department should be notified and the animal should be evaluated by a veterinarian. If clinical signs are suggestive of rabies, the animal should be immediately euthanized and tested for rabies.
- **Currently vaccinated** dogs, cats, and ferrets to a known rabid animal should be revaccinated immediately, kept under the owner's control, and observed at home for 45 days for clinical signs of rabies. During the observation period the animal should not be permitted to roam freely and should be restricted to leash walks, if applicable. At the first sign of illness or behavioral change in the animal, the local rabies control agency should be notified and the animal should be evaluated by a veterinarian. If clinical signs are suggestive of rabies, the animal should be immediately euthanized and tested for rabies.

### **Horses**

*\*The Alabama Department of Public Health should be consulted for all possible rabies exposure in horses.\**

- All species of livestock are susceptible to rabies; horses and cattle are the most frequently infected. Horses exposed to a rabid animal and **currently vaccinated** with a vaccine approved by the USDA or FDA for that species should be revaccinated immediately and observed for 45 days.
- **Unvaccinated** horses should be euthanized immediately. If the animal is not euthanized it should be kept under close observation for 6 months. Any illness in an animal under observation should be reported immediately to the local health department. If signs suggestive of rabies develop, the animal should be euthanized and the head shipped for testing.
- Barrier precautions should be used by persons handling the animal and tissues.