

# RABIES GUIDANCE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

## Animal Bites From Domestic Dogs, Cats and Ferrets

- Domestic dogs, cats and ferrets include all domestic breeds born and raised in captivity for purpose of being pets.
  - Dogs that are part dog and part wolf are not considered domestic dogs and should be treated as wild animals.
- Persons bitten by a domestic pet should immediately wash the bite wound with soap and water and consult with a physician.
- The following information should be gathered by the investigating officer:
  - Name and demographic/locating information of the bite victim.
  - The date of the bite.
  - The area of the body bitten.
  - Identifying information of the biting animal (i.e., breed, color, size, name).
  - Name and demographic/locating information of the animal owner.
  - Name of the animal's veterinarian.
  - Copy of the animal's latest rabies vaccination record, if available.
  - The current health status and location of the biting animal.
- In all domestic dog, cat and ferret bite situations, regardless of vaccination status, rabies exposures must be ruled out by one of the following actions:
  1. Holding the animal in quarantine, or animal impound facility, for a 10 day period with the day of the bite being day zero.
    - This can be done if the animal is healthy and behaving normally and the owners want to keep the animal.
      - The animal should be declared healthy by a licensed veterinarian at the start of the quarantine period AND on day 10.
      - Confinement can occur at the owner's residence provided that the law enforcement officials are comfortable that the owners will be compliant and that the owners have the ability to confine the animal to the property to prevent escape or exposure to other humans or animals, such as leash control or fenced yard.
      - If compliance is questionable, the animals can be placed in quarantine at the animal pound or with a licensed veterinarian.
      - The animal must be examined by a veterinarian if it develops signs of rabies, exhibits a change in behavior or dies during the 10 day period. If the veterinarian suspects rabies, the animal must be tested for rabies.
    - 2. Having the animal destroyed and the brain submitted to the North Dakota Department of Health Division of Laboratory Services or the North Dakota State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for rabies testing.
      - This can be done if the owners no longer want to keep the animal or can be considered in other unusual circumstances.
- All expenses incurred in quarantining, impounding or destroying and testing a domestic dog, cat or ferret are the responsibility of the animal owner.
- If the animal cannot be readily located, efforts to locate and secure the animal should be made. If the animal cannot be located, contact your local public health department or the North Dakota Department of Health.

## Animal Bites From Animals other than Domestic Dogs, Cats or Ferrets

- These types of animals include:
  - Wild animals.
  - Captive wild animals (i.e., monkeys, tigers, zoo animals, circus animals, etc.).
  - Hybrids of domestic and wild animals (i.e., wolf and dog cross).
  - Domestic livestock such as cattle, horses, pigs, goats, etc. This includes domesticated wild animals such as bison or elk.
  - Rodents and rabbits.
- Persons bitten by any animal should immediately wash the bite wound with soap and water and consult with a physician.

- Contact you local public health department or the North Dakota Department of Health.
- Keep the animal in a secure area to prevent escape until further instructions can be provided.
- If a person is bitten by a wild animal that cannot be held for observation, testing the brain will be needed to rule out rabies.
- The following information should be gathered by the investigating officer:
  - Name and demographic/locating information of the bite victim.
  - The date of the bite.
  - The area of the body bitten.
  - The type of animal inflicting the bite.
  - Name and demographic/locating information of the owner (if applicable).
  - Name of the animal's veterinarian (if applicable).
  - The current health status and location of the biting animal.

### Animal Bite / Disease Reporting Information

- Animal bites and possible human rabies exposures should be reported to the Division of Disease Control at 701.328.2378 or 800.472.2180. After hours emergency contact for Disease Control is 701.220.0819.
  - The Division of Disease Control will notify the Board of Animal Health.
- Information that should be reported to Disease Control:
  - Type of animal.
  - Name and contact information of the owner of the animal.
  - Name and contact information of the person exposed (if different than owner).
  - Rabies vaccination history of animal (if applicable).
  - Clinical signs of rabies of animal (if applicable).
  - Date exposure occurred.
  - Circumstances surrounding exposure.
- Disease Control will follow up with the owner and the exposed person if warranted.

### Laboratory Testing Information

- Brain should be excised by licensed veterinarian only.
- Intact heads will generally not be accepted. Exceptions for small animals may be made on a case-by-case basis following consultation with the laboratory. Whole heads, when accepted by the laboratory, will be assessed a fee for removal of the brain. Brains should never be frozen; it should be shipped on ice.
- Brain should be sent to the North Dakota Department of Health Division of Laboratory Services or the NDSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

#### North Dakota Department of Health

North Dakota Department of Health  
 Division of Laboratory Services, Microbiology  
 2635 East Main Avenue  
 PO Box 5520  
 Bismarck, ND 58506-5520

- For shipping protocols, questions about weekend services, test times, results, etc., please contact the Division of Laboratory Services at 701.328.6272. After hours emergency contact number of the laboratory is 701.400.2772.

#### NDSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

Mailing address:

Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory  
 NDSU Dept 7691  
 PO Box 6050  
 Fargo, ND 58108-6050

Courier address:

Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory  
 NDSU Van Es Hall  
 1523 Centennial Boulevard  
 Fargo, ND 58102

- For shipping protocols, questions about weekend services, test times, results, etc., please contact NDSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at 701.231.8307.

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