

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Recommendations for Police Dogs Involved in Biting Incidents

Scope: These recommendations apply only to currently rabies vaccinated police dogs that bite people *in the line of duty* and *are not ill with signs of rabies*.

Discussion: Police dogs are unlikely to be infected with rabies and rabies would not be suspected if these dogs bite a person while performing tasks that they are trained to do because they must be licensed in the municipality where they are housed and therefore must be vaccinated against rabies in accordance with N.J.S.A. 4:19-15.2(a).

Confining working police dogs for a 10 day period following bites occurring in the line of duty, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 26:4-82, would remove them from work and leave the police department without this valuable asset.

Based upon the above considerations, Health Officers may exempt working police dogs from the 10 day confinement (as required by N.J.S.A. 26:4-82) following bites that occur in the line of duty.

Requirements:

- Police personnel in charge of working police dogs must be knowledgeable of the clinical signs of rabies and its transmission, prevention, and control.
- The bite occurred in the line of duty and the dog does not have any clinical signs of rabies.
- A bite report is filed with the local health department with proof of current rabies vaccination status.
- Police personnel must agree to immediately contact the local health department if the dog has unusual behavior or illness within 10 days after the bite.

Procedures: After a bite report is made to the local health department, police personnel observing the dog will **closely** monitor his/her health status over the next 10 days for signs of rabies (unusual behavior, paralysis, drooling, or aggression).

If any signs of rabies are noticed, the dog **must immediately** be removed from duty and securely confined away from other animals and people for the remainder of the 10 day period from the date of the bite and the following actions taken:

- Immediately contact the local health department.
- Once confined, the dog should be evaluated by a veterinarian as soon as possible, with all precautions taken to prevent escape and persons from being bitten or exposed to the dog's saliva.
- If the dog continues to have clinical signs of rabies, the attending veterinarian may euthanize the animal and send the appropriate sample to the State Rabies Laboratory for testing.
- If the veterinarian determines that the dog does not have clinical signs of rabies, the 10 day confinement will be continued and then released by the Health Officer **only** with the approval of the consulting veterinarian.

Please contact the NJDOH Infectious and Zoonotic Diseases Program at (609) 826-4872 if you have any questions about this policy.