



**Updated December 23, 2020**

### **Guidance for Providing Animal Rabies Vaccinations During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Rabies vaccination of pets is an essential component to rabies prevention and is a necessary step to ensure the protection of the citizens of New Jersey from potential rabies exposures from their pets. During this State of Emergency, it is vital to provide rabies vaccinations to pets in a manner that is safe to pet owners or handlers and the veterinarians administering the vaccine as well as any other individuals involved in the process.

Due to the number of New Jersey residents out of work during this crisis, free municipal rabies vaccination clinics may be the only means in which some pet owners will be able to obtain a rabies vaccine for their pets. Rabies vaccines shall be administered only by a licensed veterinarian and shall not be administered by any other individual, including pet owners.

Municipal officials should work with the contracting veterinarian to plan a rabies vaccination clinic that can be held with limited risk to residents and staff. This involves avoiding person-to-person contact with animal owners, facilitating social distancing at the rabies clinic, adopting strict cleaning and disinfecting protocols, and establishing rigorous protections for all personnel participating in the clinic.

This may be done through scheduling individual appointments or requiring residents to remain outside, preferably in their vehicles, until called on an individual basis. It is recommended that a team member be assigned to manage the outdoor “waiting area” to ensure that residents are remaining in their vehicles, or if outside their vehicles, are wearing face masks and staying 6 feet apart from others at all times. Residents with COVID-19, who are ill, or who have been told to quarantine, should stay home and have a friend or family member outside the owner’s household bring the pet. Staff shall wear face masks at all times throughout the vaccine clinic and ensure that social distancing (a minimum of 6 feet) is maintained except for the brief direct exchange of the pet between the owner or animal handler and veterinarian. Residents shall wear appropriate face masks in accordance with CDC recommendations during the clinic. Hand washing stations or hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol shall be available and used frequently. Steps shall be taken to regularly clean and disinfect frequent touch surfaces and other preventive measures shall be maintained as advised by CDC to prevent disease transmission.

Dogs should be restrained with a non-retractable 6-foot leash or other safe control to allow a quick and unimpeded transfer to the veterinarian for vaccination. Cats should be transported in suitable carriers or containers to prevent escape. To avoid delay and unnecessary risks, rabies vaccination certificates can be handed to the passengers in the vehicle to be filled out with the owner’s information and animal description, or the certificate can be filled out with the information obtained when making an appointment for vaccination, but the original document must be signed by the licensed veterinarian at

the time the vaccine is administered. If pet owners or passengers will be filling out the certificates, they should be instructed to bring a pen. Pens shall not be passed from one vehicle or individual to another. The rabies vaccination certificate may be filled out and printed at the link below, but again, the original document must be signed by the licensed veterinarian at the time the rabies vaccine is administered to the animal. The description of the animal on the prefilled certificate must match the animal being vaccinated.

If you have any questions regarding municipal rabies vaccination clinics, please contact Linda Frese, Dr. Patricia Zinna, or Dr. Darby McDermott by email at [Linda.Frese@doh.nj.gov](mailto:Linda.Frese@doh.nj.gov), [Patricia.Zinna@doh.nj.gov](mailto:Patricia.Zinna@doh.nj.gov), or [Darby.McDermott@doh.nj.gov](mailto:Darby.McDermott@doh.nj.gov), or by phone at 609-826-4872. Please see the links below for the rabies vaccination certificate, the duration of immunity for 3-year rabies vaccine products, and the NJDOH VPH website for additional information on rabies; and the links for the Division of Consumer Affairs Administrative Order No. 2020-20 and the CDC Guidance for Veterinary Clinics, for more information regarding the health and safety requirements for the practice of veterinary medicine during the pandemic.

<http://healthapps.state.nj.us/forms/index.aspx#vph-26>

[https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/duration\\_of\\_immunity\\_nov2016.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/duration_of_immunity_nov2016.pdf)

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/rabies.shtml>

<https://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/COVID19/Documents/DCA-AO-2020-20.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/veterinarians.html>