



**ORANGE COUNTY**  
NORTH CAROLINA  
**ANIMAL SERVICES**

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### **Rabies Exposure Policy and Procedure**

The following operating guidelines lay out the requirements used by Orange County North Carolina for rabies exposures and suspected rabies exposures, based on the 2016 Rabies Compendium<sup>1</sup> and the authority granted to the local Health Director by the NC General Statute (G.S. 130A-41 and 130A-197. A). This policy should be reviewed and revised with each new compendium.

#### Exposures

Any owned animal that has contact with an animal that tests positive for rabies will be subject to the requirements herein. If the rabies vector is not available for testing, it will be assumed positive. If the owned animal's whereabouts cannot be accounted for and there is reasonable suspicion of contact, contact with the vector will be assumed, even if no visible bite wounds are present.

#### **Dogs/Cats**

##### Dogs/Cats That Have a Current Vaccination

A dog or cat that has a current vaccination with acceptable documentation of that vaccination must receive an examination and booster shot by a licensed veterinarian immediately after any exposure to a rabies suspect. The post-exposure booster must be given within 96 hours (4 days) or the animal will be subject to a quarantine of four (4) months at the owner or keeper's expense.

Following the exam and booster shot, the dog or cat must be under the control and observation of its owner for a 45-day period (from the date of exposure). During this time, the dog or cat should not be taken to dog parks, pet stores, boarding facilities, or other areas where it may be exposed to outside animals or people. Vet visits during this time should be arranged ahead of time with the veterinary office so that the animal can be moved into a room directly and so that staff members are aware that it is under this observation period before handling it. The animal should not be left under the care of anyone outside the owner without prior approval from Orange County Animal Services and that approval will be considered on a case by case basis, taking all factors of the case into consideration. The owner or keeper should be provided the handout from Animal Services that outlines these requirements and the activities that should be restricted or avoided during this period.

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<sup>1</sup> 2016 Rabies Compendium and related documents are available at <http://nasphv.org/documentsCompendia.html>

The Animal Control Officer monitoring the case will make contact with the owner at or around the 21-day period and again at the end of the 45-day period to make notes on the animal's progress and determine if the animal is still with the owner and healthy. After 45 days, the Officer will notify the owner that the animal can resume normal activities without restriction.

#### Dogs/Cats That Have a Lapsed Vaccination

A dog or cat that has received a rabies vaccination in the past, but does not have a current vaccination will be subject to the same requirements as those having a current vaccination as long as acceptable documentation in the form of a certificate of vaccination or other approved document can be provided. If a certificate of vaccination can be provided to Animal Services, the cat or dog will need to receive an exam and post exposure booster and have the above period of control and observation.

Dogs and cats without documentation of a past vaccination will be treated as unvaccinated and subject to a quarantine of four (4) months. If a booster shot is received within 96 hours and a certificate can later be provided, the cat or dog can be removed from quarantine and placed under the owner's control and observation (see above) at any point during the 4 months. *Note that if an owner instead chooses to pursue blood testing to confirm vaccination history at his or her own cost, a booster vaccine cannot be given until after the blood draw (but it should still occur within the 96-hour time frame).* ). *Until the results of the blood testing are available and the Health Director and Animal Services Director have made a final determination about its status, the animal must be quarantined at a veterinary clinic.*

#### Dogs/Cats That Are Unvaccinated

Dogs and cats that have never have never had a rabies vaccination, whose owners cannot provide proof of vaccination, or who are vaccinated but have not received the required booster within 96 hours of exposure, must either be euthanized or quarantined at a veterinary office for a period of four (4) months at the owner's expense. On rare occasions, a home quarantine may be permitted by Animal Services/the Health Director and for those cases, a strict confinement of the animal will be required where the cat or dog has no contact with other animals or people during the quarantine. Most cases will not be permitted to have home quarantines and will be required to quarantine the animal at a veterinary establishment that allows such quarantines.

### **Ferrets**

#### Ferrets That Have a Current Vaccination

Any ferret that has a current vaccination with acceptable documentation of that vaccination must receive an examination and booster shot by a licensed veterinarian immediately after any exposure to a rabies suspect. The post-exposure booster must be given within 96 hours (4 days) or the animal will be subject to a quarantine of six (6) months at the owner's expense.

Following the exam and booster shot, the ferret must be under the control and observation of its owner for a 45-day period (from the date of exposure). During this time, the ferret should not be taken to areas where it will be exposed to outside animals or people. Vet visits during this time should be

arranged ahead of time with the veterinary office so that the animal can be moved into a room directly and so that staff members are aware that it is under this observation period before handling it. It should not be left under the care of anyone outside the owner/keeper without prior approval from Orange County Animal Services and that approval will be considered on a case by case basis, taking all factors of the case into consideration.

The Animal Control Officer monitoring the case will make contact with the owner at or around the 21-day period and again at the end of the 45-day period to make notes on the animal's progress and determine if the animal is still with the owner and healthy. After 45 days, the Officer will notify the owner that the animal can resume normal activities without restriction.

#### Ferrets That Have a Lapsed Vaccination

Ferrets that have received a rabies vaccination in the past but do not have a current vaccination will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as long as acceptable documentation in the form of a certificate of vaccination or other approved document can be provided. This evaluation will determine whether a 45-day observation period is acceptable or whether the ferret will be required to undergo a quarantine of six months in length or euthanasia. If appropriate documentation can be provided, the ferret must still receive a post-exposure booster vaccination within 96 hours or it will be considered unvaccinated.

#### Ferrets That Are Unvaccinated

A ferret that has never had a rabies vaccination, whose owner cannot provide proof of vaccination, or which has not received the required booster within 96 hours of exposure, must either be euthanized or quarantined at a veterinary office for a period of six (6) months at the owner's expense. On rare occasions, a home quarantine may be permitted by Animal Services/ the Health Director and for those cases, a strict confinement of the animal will be required where the ferret has no contact with other animals or people during the quarantine. Most cases will not be permitted to have home quarantines and will be required to quarantine the animal at a veterinary establishment that allows such quarantines. [See appendix- forthcoming]

#### **Livestock**

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture has responsibility for rabies control and exposures dealing with livestock. Animal Services, however, will gather information about suspected livestock rabies exposures and relay that information to the Department of Agriculture when needed. Animal Services will assist the district vet from the Department of Agriculture in his or her management of the cases that require investigation and/or quarantine in Orange County.

**Approved by Colleen Bridger, MPH, PhD, Health Director and Robert A. Marotto, Animal Services Director  
March 30, 2016**

**Rabies Exposure Policy and Procedure Sign Off**

I hereby acknowledge that I have read the above policy of Orange County's Animal Services Department and that I fully understand it.

I understand that adherence to this policy is a condition of my employment with Orange County's Animal Services Department.

Signature of Employee \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Employee \_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed \_\_\_\_\_