

# RHODE ISLAND RABIES CONTROL BOARD

## **RULES AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE SUPPRESSION OF RABIES**

EFFECTIVE: 7/13/96

AUTHORITY: These regulations are adopted pursuant to Chapter 4-13-30 of the Rhode Island General Laws of 1956 as amended.

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# **RULES & REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE SUPPRESSION OF RABIES RHODE ISLAND RABIES CONTROL BOARD**

## **1.00 AUTHORITY**

These rules and regulations are adopted pursuant authority provided under Rhode Island General Laws ("R.I.G.L.:" ) 4-13- 1.3 et seq. and 42-35 for the purpose of preventing the spread of the contagious disease rabies.

## **1.02 ADMINISTRATIVE FINDINGS**

An epidemic of raccoon rabies has progressed up the Eastern Seaboard and now threatens the public health of the citizens of Rhode Island. Rhode Island had its first confirmed case of rabies January 26, 1994 in a raccoon which was killed after attacking a pet cat in Burrillville. The infection of a human with rabies is invariably fatal. The primary source of human rabies is through contact with infected domestic animals. Proper disposition of suspect rabid animals and their bite victims is essential for the diagnosis and treatment of rabies. Rabies testing can only reliably be performed by specialized examination of brain tissue. Euthanasia of suspect rabid domestic animals is therefore necessary to diagnose and prevent the spread of rabies. To avoid the destruction of healthy manageable domestic animals, quarantines are sometimes offered. A quarantine will allow the incubating rabies infection to become clinically apparent and, at the same time, prevent any further exposures by the suspect animal. Therefore, for the reasons stated above and pursuant to the powers vested in me in the Rhode Island Rabies Control Board by the Rhode Island General Laws 4-13-1.3 et seq., the Rhode Island Rabies Control Board hereby adopts these regulations for the purpose of rabies diagnosis and prevention among domestic animals and for the purpose of allowing timely rabies treatment for those humans exposed to rabies.

## **2.00 PURPOSE**

The purpose of these rules and regulations is to prevent the spread of rabies within the State of Rhode Island.

## **3.00 DEFINITIONS**

As used in these rules and regulations, the following terms shall, where the context permits, be construed as follows:

(a) The term "**Animal Control Officer**" (ACO) as used in these Regulations shall mean any person(s) employed by a city or town as a canine control officer, a dog or animal warden or a police officer responsible for animal control delegated authority by the Rhode Island Rabies Control Board.

(b) The term "**Bite**" or "**Bitten**" as used in these Regulations shall mean the possible exposure to the rabies virus via a direct bite, which results in a break in the skin of the victim, or contact between infectious material (i.e., saliva or Central Nervous System (CNS) tissue and fluid) and the eye, inside the nose, or mouth or a pre-existing break in the skin.

(c) The term "**Cat**" as used in these Regulations shall mean any member of *Felis catus* (excluding hybrids with wild felines).

(d) The term "**Compendium**" as used in these Regulations shall mean the most recent Compendium of Animal Rabies Control as published by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, Inc.

(e) The term "**Conservation Officer**" as used in these Regulations shall mean those sworn employees of the RIDEM Division of Enforcement.

(f) The term "**Currently Vaccinated**" as used in these Regulations shall mean properly injected by or under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian with a rabies vaccine licensed for use in that species by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and satisfying the following criteria:

**For dogs, cats and ferrets:**

- (1) the manufacturer's protocol with regards to minimum age of animal as well as frequency and intervals of initial vaccination(s) was followed.
- (2) at least thirty (30) days have elapsed since the initial series of vaccination; and
- (3) not more than twelve (12) months have elapsed since the last vaccine if last vaccine was the initial (series) of vaccination or the animal is a ferret, or if the vaccine has an annual booster recommendation, otherwise, not more than twenty-four (24) months have elapsed since the most recent vaccine. Other domestic animals for which a species and USDA approved rabies vaccine exists shall be considered currently vaccinated if the last booster was administered within the time frame specified by the most current compendium of animal rabies control.

**For all other species** for which there exists an unconditionally licensed rabies vaccine, the animals must be vaccinated against rabies in accordance with the most current Compendium of Animal Rabies Control. Failure or inability by the owner/keeper of a dog, cat or ferret to present or make available a rabies certificate or a copy thereof to an Animal Control Officer investigating a possible rabies exposure shall result in classification of the animal in question as not currently vaccinated against rabies.

(d) omitted

(g) The term "**Dog**" as used in these Regulations shall mean any member of *Canis familiaris* (excluding hybrids with wild canids).

(h) The term "**Domestic Animal**" as used in these Regulations shall mean animals that, through extremely long association with humans, have been bred to a degree that has resulted in genetic changes affecting the temperament, color, conformation or other attributes of

the species to the extent that makes them unique and distinguishable from wild individuals of their species.

This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (1) Domestic dog (*Canis familiaris*);
- (2) Domestic cat (*Felis catus*);
- (3) Domestic horse (*Equus catus*);
- (4) Domestic cattle (*Bos taurus* and *Bos indicus*);
- (5) Domestic sheep (*Ovis avies*)

- (i) The term "**Euthanasia**" as used in these Regulations shall mean the humane destruction of an animal accomplished by a method that involves nearly instantaneous loss of consciousness followed immediately by death or by a method that involves anesthesia produced by an agent which causes painless and rapid loss of consciousness and death during that period of unconsciousness.
- (j) The term "**Ferret**" as used in these Regulations shall, mean any member of the family *Mustela putorius* or Common European Ferret.
- (k) The term "**Manual**" as used in these Regulations shall mean those pages of the most current State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations Manual for Rabies Management which pertain to Rabies Post Exposure Management.
- (l) The term "**Owner/Keeper**" as used in these Regulations shall mean any person or agency keeping, harboring or having charge or control of or responsibility for control of an animal or any person or agency which permits and dog, cat, ferret or domestic (or wild) animal to habitually be or remain on or be lodged or fed within such person's yard or premises. This term shall not apply to veterinary or kennel or shelter operators temporarily maintaining on their premises, animals owned by others.
- (m) The term "**Person(s)**" as used in these Regulations shall mean any individual, partnership, firm, joint stock company, corporation, association, trust, estate, municipality or other government entity or other legal entity.
- (n) The term "**Quarantine**" as used in these Regulations shall mean the isolation and physical confinement of an animal for purpose of observation at a State or and City/Town approved facility.
- (o) The term "**Target Species**" as used in these Regulations shall mean those animals at high risk for incubating rabies, including, but not limited to, raccoons, foxes, skunks, bats and woodchucks.

## **5.00 RABIES TESTING**

No suspect rabid animal shall be euthanized without being tested for rabies. Any suspect rabid animal that dies during quarantine shall be tested for rabies at a State approved laboratory.

*No animal shall be submitted for rabies testing at the Rhode Island Department of Health Laboratory without prior approval from said laboratory. In the event of a rabies exposure to an animal, the State Veterinarian shall be responsible for approving the specimen. In the event of a rabies exposure to a human, the Department of Health shall be the party responsible for approval of the specimen.*

## **6.00 RABIES EXPOSURE**

**In the event that any human being or domestic animal receives a bite from any domestic animal**, the individual bitten or the owner of the domestic animal which was bitten may:

- (a) Immediately contact the Animal Control Officer ("ACO") in the town within whose borders the bite occurred.
- (b) Upon report of a bite involving a dog, cat or ferret, the ACO shall make a site visit within twenty-four (24) hours and make a report including but not limited to, facts surrounding the bite, description of the biting animal, proof of most recent rabies

vaccination, biting animal owner's name and address, victim's name and address or bitten animal owner's name and address along with the ACO's recommendations and/or order of disposition of the biting animal.

6.01 During the course of the ACO's site visit and investigation, he/she shall make an order concerning euthanasia, strict confinement, close observation and/or rabies immunization of any dog, cat, or ferret involved, either the biter or the one bitten. Such order shall be in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Manual. The person exposed and/or the owner or keeper of a suspect rabid dog, cat or ferret shall be notified by the ACO within twenty-four (24) hours of the disposition of the exposing/exposed animal.

(a) All recommendations and orders shall be consistent with the most recent Manual.

(b) If the bite occurs during an animal attack and the attacking dog, cat or ferret is killed during the course of the attack, the ACO may, **pending specimen approval**, cause the head of the attacking animal to be submitted for examination and testing to the Department of Health Laboratory.

(c) Canines belonging to State/Municipal police departments that bite during the course of their police duties may not necessarily be placed under quarantine provided such animals are current on their rabies immunization. Such animals, if not quarantined, must be examined by a veterinarian fourteen (14) days following any such bite incident and certified in writing free from signs of rabies.

(d) If the suspect rabid animal(s) reside(s) in a municipality other than that where the bite occurred, the responding Animal Control Officer shall notify the Animal Control Officer for the town where the suspect animal resides. The ACO for the municipality where the animal resides, shall than be responsible for ensuring that the conditions of confinement/quarantine are met.

**6.02 In the event that any human being is bitten by a target species for rabies, the individual bitten may call an ACO.**

(a) The target species may be euthanized by an ACO.

(b) The euthanized animal's head shall be submitted to DOH Laboratory for rabies testing.

**6.03 In the event that any dog, cat, ferret or other domestic animal is bitten or attacked by a target species for rabies, the owner of the dog, cat or ferret shall contact an ACO in the town within which the bite occurred.**

(a) The target species may be euthanized by an ACO and the head may be submitted to the Rhode Island Department of Health Laboratory for rabies testing.

(b) If the exposed animal is domestic and other than a dog, cat or ferret, the responding ACO shall notify the State Veterinarian.

(c) If the exposed animal is nondomestic and other than a target species, the ACO shall contact the State Veterinarian.

(d) If the exposed animal is a dog or cat, the responding ACO shall make an order concerning euthanasia, strict confinement, close observation and/or rabies immunization of the exposed animal.

(e) If the suspect rabid animal(s) reside(s) in a municipality other than that where the bite occurred, the responding Animal Control Officer shall notify the Animal Control Officer for the town where the animal resides. The ACO for the municipality where the animal resides shall then be responsible for ensuring that the conditions of confinement/quarantine are met.

## **7.00 QUARANTINE**

An ACO may order euthanasia, strict confinement, close observation and/or rabies immunization consistent with the most recent Manual of any dog or cat suspected of rabies incubation or exposure. Any order for strict confinement shall specifically enumerate all conditions of such confinement. A copy of such order shall be sent to the State Veterinarian within seven (7) days of issuance.

7.01 Any suspect rabid animal which cannot safely be maintained in a secure off premise quarantine, and which does not meet the criteria of Section 5.03 for home quarantine, may be euthanized and tested for rabies.

7.02 If, in the opinion of the State Veterinarian, the quarantined animal cannot humanely be maintained for the required quarantine period, the animal may be euthanized and tested for rabies prior to the completion of the quarantine period.

### **7.03 AT HOME QUARANTINE**

An ACO may allow an at home quarantine for any suspect rabid dog, cat or ferret if the following criteria can be met:

- (a) The suspect animal is currently vaccinated against rabies;
- (b) The ACO or a licensed veterinarian shall observe and certify in writing that the animal is free of signs of rabies on at least the first and last day of the quarantine period at the owner's expense. If the animal becomes ill during the quarantine or confinement period, the local ACO shall immediately be notified by the person having possession of the animal. At the end of the quarantine period, the release from quarantine must be accomplished in writing.

7.04 The ACO may refuse a home quarantine based on but not limited to the following factors:

- (a) The owner's past history of non-compliance with regard to animal control ordinances/regulations/statutes.
- (b) An inspection of the proposed home confinement area which reveals lack of availability of suitable quarantine facilities.
- (c) Evidence of probable non-compliance (intentional or otherwise) to an order of quarantine.

If, in the opinion of the State Veterinarian, a suspect rabid animal cannot be safely quarantined off premise, the State Veterinarian may at his/her discretion allow an at home quarantine, the conditions of Section 7.03 notwithstanding.

7.05 In the event that the suspect rabid dog or cat with a known owner or keeper is quarantined by order of the ACO on the owner's or keeper's premises:

- (a) The owner/keeper must strictly abide by the order of quarantine issued by the ACO
- (b) Such order of quarantine must include specific instructions regarding manner of confinement, frequency of observation of the suspect rabid animal, characteristics to be aware of and what to do in the event of illness, behavioral change or escape.
- (c) Said animal must be examined by a veterinarian or ACO on the last day of quarantine and certified in writing to be free of signs of rabies.
- (d) Failure by the owner to abide by the specific instructions of the at home quarantine will result in seizure of the animal and euthanasia and rabies testing or completion of the quarantine off premise at the owner's expense.

#### 7.06 OFF PREMISES QUARANTINE

In the event that the owner/keeper of a suspect rabid dog or cat, chooses to quarantine their animal instead of euthanizing said animal for rabies testing, and the conditions of Section 7.03 cannot be met with the result that the animal is quarantined off of the owner/keeper's premises, the owner or keeper shall be responsible for all costs resulting from such ordered quarantine, including, but not limited to, a specified amount per day for the care and feeding of the quarantined animal as specified by the facility, and any and all additional fees required by the quarantining veterinarian, animal hospital, pound and/or kennel arising out of the quarantine. In order to be released from quarantine, any suspect rabid animal quarantined on or off premises must be examined by an ACO or Veterinarian on or after the last day of quarantine and certified in writing to be free from signs of rabies.

7.07 In the event that the suspect rabid dog or cat quarantined off premises becomes ill or displays a behavioral change during the course of the quarantine period, the ACO shall cause said animal to be examined by a licensed veterinarian. If the veterinarian concludes that the animal shows signs compatible with a diagnosis of rabies, the animal shall be euthanized and tested for rabies.

#### 7.08 Strays

In the event that the suspect rabid dog or cat has no apparent owner and the ACO orders quarantine, the suspect rabid dog or cat shall be held in quarantine a minimum of five (5) days in accordance with R.I.G.L. 4-13-15.

- (a) In order to allow the owner/keeper an opportunity to claim the animal, a reasonable attempt to notify the owner/keeper of the seizure and quarantine of the animal shall be made. Such notice may be limited to posting the animals description at the place of quarantine and/or the office of the town clerk.
- (b) After the five (5) day minimum quarantine, the suspect rabid dog or cat may be euthanized by a duly licensed veterinarian.
- (c) If euthanasia of said animal is conducted and if the animal euthanized has bitten an animal or human, the head shall be submitted for examination and rabies testing.

(d) If the suspect rabid dog or cat with no apparent owner and/or keeper dies at any time during the quarantine and said animal has bitten an animal or a human, the animal shall be decapitated and the head shall be submitted for examination and rabies testing.

(e) If the suspect rabid dog or cat with no apparent owner/or keeper becomes ill at any time during the quarantine and said animal has bitten an animal or a human, the animal shall be examined by a licensed veterinarian.

(f) If the veterinarian determines that said animal shows signs compatible with a diagnosis of rabies, the animal shall be euthanized and the head submitted for examination and rabies testing.

#### **7.09 FERRETS**

Due to the lack of an established incubation period, if the suspect rabid animal is a ferret, the ACO shall handle the animal according to the recommendations of the most current Compendium. The ACO shall also make an order concerning euthanasia, restraint, quarantine or disposal of a ferret as deemed necessary and consistent with the Manual and/or the most current Compendium. The ACO shall cause a copy of any order he/she issues to be sent to the State Veterinarian.

#### **7.10 LIVESTOCK AND NON-DOMESTIC ANIMALS**

(a) If the suspect rabid animal is domestic and other than a dog, cat, or ferret, the disposition of said animal will be determined by the State Veterinarian.

(b) If the suspect rabid animal is non-domestic and other than a target species the disposition of said animal will be determined by the State Veterinarian.

#### **8.00 RECORD KEEPING**

(a) All ACO's shall maintain a record of all animals placed under quarantine and the final disposition of the animal following the termination of the quarantine or rabies examination.

(b) Any order of quarantine shall be made on forms provided by the DEM, Division of Agriculture. A copy of any order of quarantine so issued shall be sent to the State Veterinarian, Animal Health Program, Division of Agriculture, Department of Environmental Management.

(c) In the event that any ACO orders a dog, cat, or ferret euthanized for the purpose of Rabies Diagnosis, the head shall be examined and tested for rabies by a State approved laboratory.

(d) No head shall be submitted for rabies examination and testing without prior approval from the DOH Laboratory.

#### **9.00 VIOLATIONS**

(a) Any person, who violates any quarantine imposed under these regulations may be charged under 4-13-29.3 and upon conviction be liable to imprisonment not exceeding 1 (one) year, or a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars (\$500.00)

## **10.00 SEVERABILITY**

If any section or provision of these Regulations is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining Sections or provisions of the Regulations shall not be affected thereby.

## **11.00 CONSISTENCY**

No provision of these Regulations shall be construed to prevent enforcement of any other state, federal or local laws and regulations duly adopted for the purpose of protecting the public health.

## **EFFECTIVE DATES**

These rules shall take effect on the date specified in the attached certification promulgation by the Rhode Island Rabies Control Board Director Environmental Management and the Environmental Standards Board. The foregoing rules and regulations, after due notice and an opportunity for hearing, are hereby adopted and filed with Secretary of State this 13th day of June , 1996 become effective twenty (20) days after filing, in accordance with the provisions of the General Laws of 1956, as amended, specifically Chapters 42-17.1 and 42-35 and 4-12.

Chairperson Susan Littlefield  
Rhode Island Rabies Control Board  
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