

State of Delaware

Certificate of Medical Exemption from Rabies Vaccination

Procedure

Del. C. Title 3, Chapter 82, Subchapter 1

In October 2020, an amendment to the Delaware Rabies Law was passed which allows for the exemption of a dog, cat, or ferret from rabies vaccination. The law dictates that:

- I. Exemption from vaccination against rabies may be permitted if a licensed veterinarian has examined the animal and based on the veterinarian's professional judgment, has certified in writing that at the time, vaccination would endanger the animal's health because of its infirmity, disability, illness, or other medical considerations and a titer test, in the case of these medical exemptions, may be administered to assist in determining the need for the vaccination.
- II. The owner of the dog will be responsible for keeping a valid rabies vaccination certificate or exemption certificate in their possession for inspection by an animal control officer, the Department of Agriculture or the Division of Public Health, if deemed necessary.
- III. Certification that the animal is exempt from vaccination shall be valid for a period of 1 year from the date of the issuance of the certificate of exemption, after which time the animal shall be re-examined by a licensed veterinarian and vaccinated against rabies or a new certificate of exemption shall be issued to the animal's owner.
- IV. Any animal that receives a certificate of exemption under this section must be treated as unvaccinated in case of potential rabies exposure.
- V. Any form necessary to implement this section shall be designed by the Department of Agriculture and made available to licensed veterinarians.

Titers

Current national guidance in regard to rabies antibody measurements in animals would indicate that rabies antibody levels (i.e., titers) should not be used as a substitute for a current vaccination status in managing rabies exposures or determining the need for booster vaccinations. Interpreting titers as they relate to whether or not a dog or cat will remain well if exposed to rabies is challenging. Rabies antibody levels are a good indicator of a dog or cat's response to the rabies vaccine and antibodies are an important component of protection if a dog or cat is exposed to rabies. However, since other immunologic factors also play a role in preventing rabies and our abilities to measure and interpret those other factors are not well developed, there is concern about using rabies antibody levels as the sole determinant of a dog or cat's immune system to withstand an exposure or need for a routine booster vaccination in accordance with the manufacturer's labeling. Because of the challenges associated with rabies immunology and because rabies is a fatal disease that can also infect people, it is recommended that evidence of circulating rabies virus antibodies not be used as a substitute for current vaccination in managing rabies exposures.^{1,2}

1. Brown CM, Conti L, Ettestad P, et al. Compendium of animal rabies prevention and control, 2011. MMWR Recomm Rep 2011;4:60(RR-6):1-17. Available online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/resources/publications/index.html>.

2. Virginia Guidelines for Rabies Prevention and Control. Virginia Department of Health. February 2013. Available at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/Epidemiology/DEE/Rabies/>.

(Directly excerpted from Rabies Vaccination Exemptions in Virginia: What Veterinarians Need to Know. Virginia Department of Health. August 2019. Available at https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/12/2019/08/RabiesVaccinationExemptionsVirginia_GuidanceForVeterinarians.pdf.)

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Using this form

1. Complete **all sections** of the Certificate of Medical Exemption for Rabies Vaccination following examination of the patient to be exempted.
2. **All fields** in the certificate must have an entry even if “N/A” is entered (e.g., Mailing Address, Clinic Email Address).
3. Certificates are not considered complete without a **signature** from the veterinarian, and **initials and signature** from the legal owner or custodian.
4. Veterinarians examining Delaware-resident patients at **out-of-state locations** must contact the Office of the State Veterinarian at 302-698-4500 before exempting a patient from rabies vaccination.
5. Following completion of the certificate, the **original** must be kept in the **patient’s medical record** and a **copy** must be provided to the **legal owner or custodian**.
6. A **copy** of the certificate must also be provided to the **Office of the State Veterinarian** by mail, email, or fax within seven (7) business days of completing the certificate. The Office of the State Veterinarian does not approve or deny certificates, but only keeps them on file for tracking purposes.

Delaware Department of Agriculture
Attn: State Veterinarian
2320 S. DuPont Hwy.
Dover, DE 19901

302-697-4451 (fax)

deanimalhealth@delaware.gov

302-698-4500 (phone, for questions)