

The Rabies Law was updated in July 2021 and Delaware Department of Agriculture has developed new animal exposure reporting forms which consider the regulatory changes. The forms also guide you in post-exposure management and determining the length of quarantine that is needed for a dog, cat, or ferret. Discard your old forms and begin to use the linked forms.

It is important that you familiarize yourself with the Rabies Law (3 Delaware Code, Chapter 82, Subchapter I), which can be found at <https://delcode.delaware.gov/title3/c082/sc01/index.html>.

Please also review the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, 2016 – Part B. 5. Postexposure management, at <http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/NASPHVRabiesCompendium.pdf>. The guidelines for managing animals exposed to rabies referenced in the Rabies Law are found here.

Please use your clinical judgment when reporting a bite, scratch, or other wounds occurring to animals to our office. We want you to report all known and suspected rabies exposures; please focus on high-risk exposures. We do not want to receive “bite reports.” If you do not suspect that your patient could have been exposed to rabies during the altercation that led to its injury, no reporting to our office is necessary.

Please contact Dr. Karen Lopez or Mark Short, Rabies Coordinator, with any questions or concerns.

Concern	Contact
Animal rabies exposures Animals with signs of rabies Euthanizing animals that have been exposed to rabies	<u>Agriculture</u> : 302-698-4630 (p); 302-697-4492 (f); <a href="mailto:rabies.hotline@delaware.gov">rabies.hotline@delaware.gov</a>
Human rabies exposures Euthanizing animals that have exposed humans Submitting animals for rabies testing	<u>Public Health</u> : 302-744-4990 (p); 1-888-972-9705 (24/7 Epi on-call); <a href="mailto:reportdisease@delaware.gov">reportdisease@delaware.gov</a>

### Highlights of Delaware Rabies Law Changes - 2021

1. **Vaccinate immediately.** Vaccinate all patients with suspected rabies exposures immediately regardless of vaccination status at time of exposure.  
\*\*\*If an animal has potentially exposed a human to rabies, it should not be vaccinated until the end of the 10-day strict post-bite quarantine to see if it develops signs of rabies.
2. **Any previous proof of rabies vaccination à 45-day quarantine.** Whether a patient is UTD or overdue for a rabies vaccination at the time of its rabies exposure, if it has prior proof of rabies vaccination, it is placed under a 45-day period of close observation under the owner’s control.
3. **Never vaccinated or no proof of rabies vaccination à 4-month strict quarantine (except for ferrets) or euthanasia.** The shorter duration 4-month strict quarantine replaces the previous 6-month strict quarantine, except for ferrets which are still 6 months. For patients whose owners claim that the patient was rabies vaccinated previously but they can provide no record of such, prospective serological monitoring is an option but other states have reported that few clients opt for this due to the expense. Contact our office if you’d like to perform this protocol.
4. **Aggressor animal alive and healthy at 10 days post attack à victim can be released from quarantine.** If the client can provide information (see attached form) about the aggressor animal and attests that the animal is alive and not showing signs of rabies 10 days following the attack, the victim animal can be released from quarantine regardless of either animal’s vaccination status at the time of the altercation.

\*\*\*No quarantine is necessary when both the aggressor and the victim animal are both UTD on rabies vaccines also.

5. **Animal not considered vaccinated for 28 days after its first ever rabies vaccine.** Within 28 days after initial vaccination, a peak rabies virus antibody titer is expected, and the animal can be considered immunized. When an animal is receiving a rabies booster vaccination, it is considered immunized immediately after the booster even if it was overdue for the vaccine.
6. **Police dog bites a human in line of duty à no 10-day strict post bite observation needed.** A police dog from any recognized law-enforcement agency is not subject to being quarantined after biting any person, if such bite occurred while the dog was being used for a law-enforcement purpose and the dog is current on its rabies vaccination.