

What Pet Owners Need to Know About Rabies Vaccinations in New York State

(Effective November 20, 2002, this information sheet must be provided by pet dealers to consumers upon point of sale of cats, dogs, and ferrets.)

State law requires rabies vaccinations (shots) for all cats, dogs and domesticated ferrets!

(Note: Ferrets are illegal in New York City.)

Where can I get my pet vaccinated?

All counties (excluding New York City counties) are required to provide a free vaccination clinic every four months. Contact your county health department for the schedule in your area. Rabies vaccinations are also available from your veterinarian. If you have questions about new vaccines developed specifically for cats and for pets at younger ages, contact your veterinarian.

When should my pet receive its first rabies vaccination?

The law requires that your pet's first rabies vaccination be given no later than four months (three months in New York City) after its date of birth. Many rabies vaccines are licensed for use at three months, although some may be given at younger ages.

When should my pet receive its second rabies vaccination?

Your pet should receive its second rabies vaccination within one year after the first vaccination. The second rabies shot and all shots thereafter are sometimes called booster shots.

After my pet gets its second rabies shot, when is the next booster shot due?

After the second rabies shot, you need to get additional booster shots either annually or every three years, depending on the type of vaccine administered.

What proof will I have that my pet received its rabies shots?

The veterinarian, or a person under the veterinarian's supervision, will provide you with a certificate as proof that your pet has been vaccinated. The veterinarian's office will also keep a copy of your pet's vaccination certificate. The law requires the veterinarian to provide the vaccination certificate to any public health official for any case involving your dog, cat or ferret that may have been exposed to rabies, or in any case of possible exposure of a person or another animal to rabies.

What if my pet needs to be taken to the veterinarian?

Whenever you bring your pet to a veterinarian, s/he will verify if the animal is up-to-date on its rabies shots. If the animal is not up-to-date on its rabies shots or exempt as stated below, or if the veterinarian cannot find proof of the animal's rabies vaccination history, you may request your pet be vaccinated at that time.

*If my pet bites a person, does it have to be euthanized (put to sleep)? **

If your pet bites a person and you wish to avoid euthanizing and testing it for rabies, it must be confined and observed for ten days. If your pet is not up-to-date on its rabies shots, the ten-day confinement/observation period must take place, at the owner's expense, at an appropriate facility such as an animal shelter, veterinarian's office, or kennel. If your pet is up-to-date on its rabies shots, the county health department may allow the ten-day confinement/observation period to take place in your home. During the ten-day confinement period, the county or a designated party must verify that your pet is under confinement and observation, has remained healthy during and at the end of the ten-day period. (* In New York City, ten-day observation periods may be done at the home of the pet owner, regardless of the animal's rabies vaccination status.)

Fines

If your dog, cat or domesticated ferret is not vaccinated, is not up-to-date on its vaccinations, or is not properly confined after biting someone, as the owner you shall be subject to a fine not to exceed \$200 for each offense. Additional fines may apply locally.

Exemptions

The vaccination requirements shall not apply to any dog, cat, domesticated ferret if the animal is transported through New York state and remains in the state 15 days or less; the animal is confined to the premises of an incorporated society devoted to the care of lost, stray or homeless animals; a licensed veterinarian has determined that the vaccination will adversely affect the animal's health; the animal is confined to the premises of a college or other educational or research institution for research purposes; or if the animal is unowned (feral, wild, not socialized).