



# BOH Forms: #64 Rabies Protocols

Board of Health and Local Health Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

This **Checklist** highlights many of the actions to take when rabies is reported or possible. used in tandem with the **MA DPH Advisories**. . .  
**In accordance with** 30 CMR 10.00: M.G.L. c. 129, §§ 2, 3, 7, 11, 15, 18 through 21 and 28 and c. 140, § 145B, 105 CMR 335, 300

## What is Rabies

***Rabies is a contagious and dangerous disease carried by mammals which often results in death. It is spread by direct contact with bodily fluids including saliva, blood, etc.***

**Rabies** is a disease affecting all mammals, including man, caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system, including the brain. Symptoms may include unexplained aggression, impaired locomotion, varying degrees of paralysis, and extreme depression or viciousness. After the onset of symptoms, terminal paralysis and death are imminent. Wolf hybrids and exotic animals are considered wild animals.

**Strains of Rabies** There are several strains of the virus that are carried by different species of animals. A "strain" of rabies is a form of the virus that is primarily carried by a specific species of animal, known as the dominant reservoir species. Although a strain is specific to a particular species, other mammals are susceptible to that strain as well. When an animal other than the normal host species contracts the virus, it is called a spillover. In the case of the raccoon strain, which has been affecting the New England area since September of 1992, the most common spillover animals have included skunks, cats, woodchucks, and foxes. The fact that spillovers occur is cause for some concern.

**Transmission:** Most commonly, rabies is transmitted by means of a bite wound. The virus is present in the saliva of the infected animal and is transmitted to the victim that is bitten. Occasionally rabies is transmitted by other forms of exposure such as contact between saliva of an infected animal and broken skin, open wounds or contact between infected saliva and mucous membranes (such as mouth or eyes).

**After Exposure:** Once the virus has been introduced under the skin, it replicates at the site and spreads to the brain via the nerves and spinal cord. The time the virus takes to reach the brain is called the incubation period. This period is determined by how far the bite wound is from the head. During the incubation period the animal is NOT infectious. After the incubation period has ended -- with the virus reaching the brain and proceeding to the salivary glands of the animal -- that animal becomes infectious and IS capable of transmitting the virus through a bite. For dogs and cats there is a period of about three days in which an animal will shed (be able to transmit) rabies virus in its saliva but will not be showing any neurological signs. After this, the infected animal will begin to exhibit signs of the disease and its health will deteriorate rapidly. Most likely, a dog or cat will be dead within 4 or 5 days of showing clinical signs of the disease.

## Rabies and the BOH

*Follow all official guidance and orders and stay informed.*

**Appoint Animal Inspectors who work under the Guidance of Mass Dept of Agricultural Resources** (Animal Control Officers are appointed by their Appointing Authority and may be the same person as Animal Inspector, but each has different roles and responsibilities) [Municipal Animal Inspectors and Animal Control Officers | Mass.gov](#)

- Work with municipal officials to appoint a Municipal Animal Inspector
- Pay for Animal Inspector & any rabies testing required

### Ongoing Outreach and Promotion:

- Promote or provide mandated vaccinations for cats, dogs, ferrets (330 CMR 10.2)
- Promote rabies awareness:
  - Avoid letting domestic animals roam free
  - Avoid touching wild animals
  - Report erratic/odd animal behavior to the Municipal Animal Inspector or Police

### What to do if Bitten or Scratched:

- Wash wound with soap and water for 10 full minutes



2. Biting/ Scratching animal is Domestic and Identified for Quarantine	<input type="checkbox"/> Town of Incident: _____
Owner / Caretaker Name: _____ Telephone Number: _____ Street Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____ Species: _____ Animal Name: _____ Breed: _____ Color: _____ Date of Last Rabies Vaccination: _____ Attach Rabies Certificate Duration: [____ 1 year] [____ 3 Year] [____ Unknown] Date of Booster Vaccination _____ Attach Rabies Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/> Owned Domestic Animal (Fill in Below) <input type="checkbox"/> Stray Domestic Animal (Fill In Below) Owner/ Caretaker Name: _____ Telephone Number: _____ Street Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____ Species: _____ Animal Name: _____ Breed: _____ Color: _____ Date of Last Rabies Vaccination: _____ Attach Rabies Certificate Duration: __ 1 year] __ 3Year) __ Unknown
Euthanized <input type="checkbox"/> Date: _____ Rabies Testing <input type="checkbox"/> Date: _____	Euthanized <input type="checkbox"/> Date: _____ Rabies Testing <input type="checkbox"/> Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Victim has Client/Patient Relationship with Reporter	<input type="checkbox"/> Biting/Scratching animal has Client/Patient Relationship with Reporter

Human Victim (record below; name, address, phone number)

Additional Information:

**Animal Questions or Concerns? Rabies Program Coordinator: 617-626-1810**

(<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/rabies-protocols-and-regulations>)

**Human Questions or Concerns? Division of Epidemiology: 617-983-6800**

(<https://www.mass.gov/rabies>)

**Domestic Animal Protocols**

Exposure Category 1 Visible bite or scratch from another domestic animal which has been identified and is available for quarantine	EXPOSED DOG/CAT NOT CURRENTLY VACCINATED (previously vaccinated) 1. Notify local director of health and local animal inspector 2. Biting animal will be placed under strict confinement for 10 days 3. A) If biting animal is healthy at the end of 10 days, victim is not at risk for rabies 3. B) If biting animal begins to exhibit signs compatible with rabies, biting animal should be euthanized and submitted for rabies testing	EXPOSED DOG/CAT NOT VACCINATED 1. Notify local director of health and local animal inspector 2. Biting animal will be placed under strict confinement for 10 days 3. A) If biting animal is healthy at the end of 10 days, victim is not at risk for rabies - vaccinate victim 3. B) If biting animal begins to exhibit signs compatible with rabies, biting animal should be euthanized and submitted for rabies testing
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	<p>4.A) If test results are negative, victim is not at risk for rabies</p> <p>4.B) If test results are positive,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notify local director of health and local animal inspector</li> <li>2. Booster victim immediately</li> <li>3. Strict Confinement by owner for 45 days</li> </ol>	<p>4.A) If test results are negative, victim is not at risk for rabies, vaccinate victim</p> <p>4.B) If test results are positive,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notify local director of health and local animal inspector</li> <li>2. Euthanize, or Vaccinate animal immediately and Isolate for 3 months followed by 1 month Strict Confinement</li> </ol>
<p><b>Exposure Category 2</b></p> <p>Visible bite or scratch from another domestic animal which has NOT been identified and is NOT available for quarantine</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notify local director of health and local animal inspector</li> <li>2. Booster Animal immediately</li> <li>3. Strict Confinement for 45 days</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notify local director of health and local animal inspector</li> <li>2. Vaccinate Animal immediately</li> <li>3. Strict Confinement for 4 months</li> </ol>

- Any non-domestic animal biting a human must be reported to the Department of Public Health
- Do not vaccinate any dog or cat which is under a 10-day quarantine
- Any animal euthanized while under a 10-day quarantine MUST be submitted for rabies testing
- If most recent rabies vaccination was administered within 28 days, it is not necessary to booster

**☐ Exposure Details**

1. “Not Currently Vaccinated” means there is proof that the animal has received a rabies vaccination at some point prior, but the duration that vaccine was good for has been exceeded.
2. “Unvaccinated” means the animal has never received a rabies vaccine, or the first shot was administered less than 28 days ago.
3. Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology: (617) 983-6800