



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

August 2, 2021

Dear Maryland Veterinarian:

This letter is to provide you with information and resources regarding rabies prevention and control in Maryland.

### **Rabies Information for Veterinarians**

Rabies is a preventable viral disease of all mammals that is usually transmitted by the bite of a rabid animal. It is caused by viruses in the genus *Lyssavirus* and is nearly always fatal once symptoms appear. In Maryland, rabies is most frequently found in wildlife, most commonly raccoons, foxes, skunks, and bats. Domestic animals, including livestock, are also at risk, and cats are the most frequently identified rabid domestic animal. In 2020, 255 animals tested positive for rabies in Maryland, including 35 cats, 2 livestock, and 2 coyotes.

Rabies resources, including The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 10.06.02 Rabies and the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, are available online for reference:

<https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OIDEOR/CZVBD/Pages/rabies.aspx>.

### **Reporting Obligations for Veterinarians**

Animal bites and suspected/confirmed rabies cases are reportable in the state of Maryland. Veterinarians are strongly encouraged to establish contact with their local health department and animal control authority to assist with reporting. Contact information for Maryland's 24 health jurisdictions is available online: <https://health.maryland.gov/Pages/departments.ASPX>.

### **Veterinary Infection Control**

Standard precautions (latex gloves at a minimum) for yourself and your staff are recommended, when examining a stray, feral, unfamiliar animal, or an animal exhibiting neurological signs, to prevent non-bite exposures to potentially rabid animals. Although gloves will probably not protect against a bite exposure to a rabid animal, rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is typically administered more frequently for non-bite exposures than for true bite exposures. The NASPHV Compendium of Veterinary Standard Precautions for Zoonotic Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel can be accessed online:

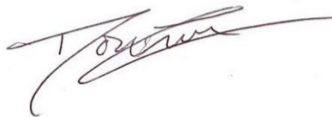
<http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/VeterinaryStandardPrecautions.pdf>.

**Euthanasia of an animal that has potentially exposed a person to rabies**

Veterinarians should communicate with appropriate local public health and animal control officials regarding any mammal that presents for euthanasia and has potentially exposed a person to rabies in the past ten days. Per COMAR 10.06.02.13, if a dog, cat, ferret, or livestock has had bite or non-bite contact with an individual in the 10 days prior to euthanasia, the veterinarian shall humanely euthanize the animal and submit the head for rabies testing. **In nearly all cases, observation or testing of the animal can eliminate the need to administer rabies PEP to the exposed individual.**

If you have any questions regarding rabies prevention and control, please contact the Center for Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases at (410) 767-5649.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Crum", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David A. Crum, DVM, MPH  
State Public Health Veterinarian  
Chief, Center for Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases