



# WORLD RABIES DAY

## September 28

[www.worldrabiesday.org](http://www.worldrabiesday.org)

### **Rabies Vaccination Clinics: A toolkit for practicing veterinarians**

#### **Introduction**

Rabies is a fatal viral zoonosis and a serious public health problem.<sup>1</sup> Over the past half-century, because of the implementation of mandatory vaccination dogs and cats, the incidence of rabies in domestic animals has decreased significantly in the United States. However, exposure risks still exist, and practicing veterinarians are the frontline of defense against the disease by vaccinating domestic animals. It is important to remember that every veterinarian is a public health official every time they vaccinate an animal against rabies.

The *Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, 2008*, produced by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, Inc. (NASPHV), recommends, "Local governments should initiate and maintain effective programs to ensure vaccination of all dogs, cats, and ferrets and to remove strays and unwanted animals."<sup>2</sup> Such procedures in the United States have reduced laboratory-confirmed cases of rabies in dogs from 6,949 in 1947 to 71 in 2006.<sup>3</sup>

The Compendium goes on to say, "Essential components of rabies prevention and control include ongoing public education, responsible pet ownership, routine veterinary care, and professional continuing education. The majority of animal and human exposures to rabies can be prevented by raising awareness about: rabies transmission routes, avoiding contact with wildlife, and appropriate veterinary care."<sup>2</sup> It is the goal of the Alliance for Rabies Control to promote rabies prevention in our communities, recognizing that rabies prevention is only one aspect of responsible pet ownership and routine veterinary care. It is hoped that by raising awareness of rabies, and by preventing the disease, pet owners will be encouraged to be responsible pet owners by providing recommended veterinary care and prevent pet overpopulation.

#### **World Rabies Day**

The mission of World Rabies Day (WRD) is to raise awareness about the impact of human and animal rabies, how easy it is to prevent it, and how to eliminate the main global sources. In 2006, a group of researchers and professionals formed a global Alliance for Rabies Control (ARC). They created and began inviting partners to join the World Rabies Day initiative. The World Rabies Day initiative now involves human and animal health partners at the international, national, state/provincial, and local levels, veterinary, medical and other specialized professional and student organizations, and corporate and non-profit partners.

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The goal of this outreach is to mobilize awareness and resources in support of human rabies prevention and animal rabies control. With the initial goal of engaging 55,000 people to take action, one for each person who dies each year from rabies, the inaugural campaign in September 2007 saw participation of nearly 400,000 individuals from at least 74 countries!

In 2009, at least 300 events were held in 105 countries, involving 775,000 people. Early reports indicate that an estimated 20 million people were educated through seminars, public service announcements and mass media and vaccination clinics held in conjunction with WRD observances helped vaccinate 1.3 million dogs.

### **Community Partnering for Rabies Prevention**

Bernard J. Turnock, in his book, *Public Health: What it is and how it works*, defines community partnering as, "Building a coalition to draw upon the full range of potential human and material resources to improve the community."<sup>4</sup> Community partnering is a way to leverage limited resources and multiply manpower. It is a way to reach new target audiences.

There are many reasons to consider community partnering for rabies prevention. Most importantly, there is an economy of scale when it comes to community efforts. Working with other community organizations can multiply the effect of a rabies vaccination clinic. It is important to consider partnering with local animal control organizations. The primary means of prevention is maintaining an animal's current rabies vaccination. Animal control agencies are the main vehicles to ensure compliance in a community. Other organizations to consider in a community-wide coalition would include other humane and rescue organizations. These groups can provide manpower to help host a rabies vaccination clinic, and would be integral in helping spread the word about such an initiative.

### **Why should practicing veterinarians get involved?**

**Rabies vaccination is required by law:** Every veterinarian is a public health official every time they vaccinate an animal against rabies. Many states and municipalities have ordinances mandating that dogs, cats, and in some cases, ferrets, be vaccinated against rabies, and in most cases that vaccine can only be administered by a licensed veterinarian. However, compliance varies widely by locale. The challenge in increasing the number of animals vaccinated is to reach pet owners and educate them about the need for vaccination. Information from the programs in one study indicates that the most successful methods for increasing vaccinations are low-cost rabies clinics and media campaigns.<sup>5</sup> The same study estimated rabies vaccine compliance to vary from twenty-nine to eighty-three percent.<sup>5</sup>

**It offers the opportunity to promote responsible pet ownership:** Veterinary participation in rabies vaccination clinics offers the opportunity to target the seventeen to seventy-one percent of the animals estimated to not be current on rabies vaccine in their community. If the clinic is held at a neighborhood location, many communities put together packets of information on responsible pet ownership to give to clients who come to rabies vaccination clinics. This is an opportunity to educate pet owners about other preventable diseases, and recommended vaccinations, internal and external parasite prevention, and pet overpopulation prevention by surgical sterilization. In many cases, the municipality will put

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together a list of cooperating veterinarians to give to clients who wish to learn more about responsible pet care. If the veterinarian hosts a clinic at his or her hospital or clinic, then clients actually come to that facility, which represents an opportunity for them to learn about other services available there.

**Increase public awareness of rabies vaccination requirements:** Community-sponsored clinics are successful in part because the local government uses the media to inform citizens. Veterinarians are key to the legitimacy of this message. By helping spread the word about rabies vaccination requirements, the veterinarian is providing a service, as well as raising awareness of the disease within the community. Rabies vaccination clinics not only increase awareness of rabies, but they actually do something to prevent the disease in the community.

### **Media Talking Points**

**General rabies information:** Rabies is caused by a virus that animals and people can get through certain exposures to the saliva or nervous tissue from a rabid animal and is nearly always fatal without proper post-exposure prophylaxis [treatment]. Rabies is zoonotic, which means it can spread from animals to people. **Rabies is 100% preventable. In most cases, preventing rabies is as simple as ensuring adequate animal vaccination and control, avoiding contact with wild animals, and educating those at risk.**

**Rabies Statistics:** Each year, there are over 7,000 cases of animal rabies reported in the U.S. These animals, mostly wildlife, can expose humans or pets to rabies. In the U.S., typically 1-3 cases of human rabies are reported per year. In the U.S., raccoons are the most common animals found to be rabid, followed by skunks and bats.

**Rabies prevention starts with the animal owner:** All dogs, cats and ferrets should be vaccinated against rabies. Many states and municipalities mandate vaccination of dogs, cats, and in some cases, ferrets. Consider vaccinating valuable livestock and horses. Rabies prevention is only one part of responsible pet ownership. Pet owners can reduce the possibility of pets being exposed to rabies by not letting them roam free. Spaying or neutering your pet may reduce any tendency they might have to roam or fight and thus reduce the chance that they will be exposed to rabies.

**What to do when your pet gets bitten by another animal:** Consult your veterinarian immediately and have your veterinarian examine your pet and assess your pet's vaccination needs. Contact local animal control if the bite was from a stray or wild animal. It is important to keep your pet's rabies vaccination up to date. Many states and municipalities require that a dog or cat that is exposed to a rabid, or presumably rabid, animal have a booster shot within five days if they are currently vaccinated. If the animal is not current then the law may state that the animal should be euthanized or quarantined for a period of six months.

**The veterinarian's role in rabies prevention:** First and foremost, the veterinarian is a source of information for clients with respect to rabies prevention. The veterinarian is the one who will vaccinate the animal to protect it against rabies, as well as educate clients about the disease and its prevention. They are also the ones who will, in collaboration with the local health department, local animal control services, and the State Veterinarian, assist the client in determining what needs to be done in the event that a pet is exposed to a rabid, or presumably rabid, animal.

## Planning Timeline

The following recommendations were developed to assist veterinarians and community partners with planning and hosting a World Rabies Day community rabies vaccination clinic. Needs will vary, but these guidelines should provide a starting point for the organization and implementation of a successful clinic.

### Pre-planning:

The first step is to consider your community's needs and resources, and use them to develop the "big picture" details of what you want your event to be; for example, consider the following:

- *Clinic capacity* - What animals (dogs/cats/ferrets) will you accept at your clinic? How many animals overall can you handle? If your clinic will handle a mixture of dogs/cats/ferrets, what proportion of each will you accept?
- *Clientele* - What members of the public are eligible for the clinic (e.g. people from only a certain geographic region; low-income families)? If this is to be a service for low-income families, what criteria for determining low-income status will you use; will you require proof of low-income status?
- *Event format* - Will you offer any service besides the rabies vaccination? What will you charge for the services you provide?

This is also a good time to double-check your state and local ordinances about rabies vaccination, as this may affect the age of animals you will accept.

### Three months before clinic:

*Determine the general details of the event.*

- Select date and time of vaccination clinic.
- Secure vaccine clinic location. Vaccine clinic can be indoor or outdoor.
- Verify insurance for liability in the event of injury or catastrophe (assumed by your college of veterinary medicine or grounds on which the vaccine clinic is located).
- Assemble your team, and clearly define roles of team members:
  1. Assign one person to coordinate the recruitment and scheduling of volunteers, including veterinarians.
  2. Assign one person to coordinate the collection of supplies.
  3. Assign one person to coordinate advertising.
  4. Assign one person to coordinate educational materials.

*Then, reach out to garner support for vaccine clinic.*

- Inform prospective community partners of the World Rabies Day initiative and of CDC vaccine recommendations. Then discuss your desire to conduct a World Rabies Day animal vaccine clinic. These community partners can include county public health offices, area veterinarians, animal shelters, animal control, etc.
- Make sure you have answered your pre-planning questions and have your general event details worked out. When you approach stakeholders, they will be more confident in the event and more likely to invest if you can clearly communicate a solid plan of action.
- Be prepared to answer the question, "How can we help?" Community groups will be more likely to get involved if there is a specific action item to which they can commit.

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### **Two months before clinic**

*Develop a versatile flyer to advertise for your vaccine clinic.*

- It's helpful to develop a PDF of a handout that can be printed and distributed for posting, as well as distributed electronically.
- The flyer should grab attention and have only the number of words necessary to convey pertinent information (the what, when, where, how much; instructions to have animals on a leash or in a carrier, and to bring vaccination records along). Templates for such a flier are available on the World Rabies Day website ([www.worldrabiesday.org](http://www.worldrabiesday.org)).
- Share your flier with media outlets, health departments, veterinary hospitals, animal shelters, pet stores, etc. If your event is targeting a low-income population, target locations such as like Laundromats, public libraries, YMCAs, and anywhere along the public bus line.

*Other ways to advertise:*

- Online community calendars. Nearly every newspaper, TV station, radio station, etc. has one. It's a free service; just make sure you heed the posting deadlines (often 4-6 weeks before event).
- Social media. Utilize your community partners' social media capacities (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) capacities to get the word out.
- Cable access. People watch it more than you think, and it's free.
- Be creative! Banners, billboards, newsletters, notice section of the local paper, etc.

### **One month before clinic**

*Develop the vaccination record that you will use during the clinic.*

- Include owner name, animal name, species/breed, age, sex, previous vaccines received, address, etc.; a sample is attached. Make enough copies for your clinic.

*Identify and collect supplies needed for the vaccine clinic.*

- See supply checklist below. Be sure to arrange for proper handling/storage of vaccines.

*Identify materials to distribute/display at vaccination clinic.*

- This may include WRD buttons, educational brochures, fact sheets, activity booklets for children, state specific rabies information and facts, etc.
- WRD buttons and other items can be ordered from [www.worldrabiesday.org](http://www.worldrabiesday.org).

*Work with local TV and radio stations to advertise your clinic.*

- Morning, noon and early evening news shows usually have segments for local features just like this. The segments will likely air in the week leading up to the event, but now is when you need to schedule these appearances.
- The stations are often more receptive if you can bring an animal to the segment.
- This is also a good time to invite them out to do a remote segment on the day of the clinic; this can be during set-up as well as during the clinic itself.

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*Schedule the clinic volunteers.*

- Veterinarians and veterinary technicians to administer vaccine
- Certificate writers (4-8 per vaccine administrator)
- Greeters to welcome individuals and direct them to check-in
- Animal holders (veterinary techs, veterinary assistants, etc).
- Volunteers to assist the public with bringing their animals in and out of the clinic
- Volunteers to maintain any 'housekeeping' needs
- Volunteers to help with setup, cleanup, and tear down of clinic.
- Identify responsible individuals to pick up and handle the following items at day's end:
  - vaccine records
  - all biohazard waste
  - remaining vaccines
  - cash box

### **Post-event**

*Always clean up after yourselves and be sure the area where you are hosting your vaccine clinic is clean and organized the way you found it prior to your event.*

*Provide thank you letters to all donors and supporters.*

*Return all items borrowed.*

*Submit summary report to the ARC.*

### **Structuring your rabies clinic**

How much space will you need? How will the clinic flow? Carefully thinking through an animal's journey from entry to exit will help you set up a well-organized clinic. Consider how you will set up these areas:

- Parking area for clinic patrons; Ask volunteers and others associated with the clinic to park in an alternate location, in order to leave these spaces free.
- Check-in station where client completes vaccine record and submits payment (if hosting a low cost vaccine clinic versus no cost vaccine clinic)
- Waiting area for clients as their animals go through the clinic
- Work areas for injections; providing separate areas for canines from felines and ferrets will make for a less stressful environment for the animals and the owners.
- Check-out station where client collects vaccination receipt, rabies certificate, rabies tag, educational take-home materials and thanks. (Be sure to keep copies or a data base for each animal/owner to place with the vaccine record you developed.)

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- Rabies education area in which to distribute materials and answer questions; this would be convenient to combine with the waiting area.
- Break area for volunteers, especially if you are hosting an all-day clinic. You will want a spot for volunteers to grab lunch, drinks, etc.
- Be sure public restrooms are accessible. You might have restrooms within the facility that is hosting your clinic. Or, if you are having your vaccine clinic in the park, be sure the public restrooms are unlocked and accessible. (You may need to contact your city or county office).

### Rabies Clinic Supply Checklist

The items on this checklist are necessary to host a rabies vaccination clinic. This checklist is designed to use for pre-clinic planning, as well as the day of the clinic organization.<sup>6</sup>

- Date, Time, and Location for the Clinic
- Tents (if desired)
- Tables/Chairs (for certificate writers)
- Rabies certificates
- Tags/Hooks
- Vaccines/Syringes
- Vaccine Coolers
- Ice Packs
- Pens and Pencils
- Barricades (if desired to help control traffic)
- Sharps Biohazard Containers
- Road Signs and Signage Identifying the Clinic (include date and hours of operation)
- First Aid Kit
- Garbage Bags
- Masking Tape
- Pliers
- Towels
- Paper Towels
- Scotch Tape
- Owner/Animal info paperwork and Clipboards
- Leashes
- Cat Gloves (Welder Style)
- Muzzles (variety of sizes)
- Cat jackets (variety of sizes)
- Cat Carriers
- Catch Pole
- Alcohol/Disinfectant Spray Bottles
- Pooper Scooper
- Broom/Dust Pan
- Donation Jar
- Cash box where cash and checks can remain secure throughout the event



RABIES VACCINATION CLINIC ANIMAL INFORMATION FORM

**Animal Information:**

Animal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Breed: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: M or F Spayed or Neutered: Yes or No

Color(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Age: 4 – 12 mo \_\_\_\_\_ 12 mo or older \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: under 20lbs \_\_\_\_\_ 20-50 lbs \_\_\_\_\_ over 50 lbs \_\_\_\_\_

Proof of Prior Rabies Vac.\*:

Rabies Certificate \_\_\_\_\_

ACS Database \_\_\_\_\_

ACS Renewal Card \_\_\_\_\_

Vet. Reminder \_\_\_\_\_

Three Year Vaccination?

Yes No

**Animal Information:**

Animal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Breed: \_\_\_\_\_

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Color(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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Proof of Prior Rabies Vac.\*:

Rabies Certificate \_\_\_\_\_

ACS Database \_\_\_\_\_

ACS Renewal Card \_\_\_\_\_

Vet. Reminder \_\_\_\_\_

Three Year Vaccination?

Yes No

\* Your rabies tag alone is not sufficient proof that your pet has been vaccinated. Regulations require that one of these forms of proof be provided as proof to enable the veterinarian to give a three year vaccination.

## References:

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<sup>1</sup> Rabies. In: Heymann D, ed. Control of communicable diseases manual. 18th ed. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association; 2004:438–47.

<sup>2</sup> National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians. Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, 2008. Available at <http://www.nasphv.org>.

<sup>3</sup> Blanton JD, Hanlon CA, Rupprecht CE. Rabies surveillance in the United States during 2006. J Am Vet Med Assoc 2007;231:540-56. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/publications/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Public Health: What it is and how it works*. Bernard J. Turnock. P. 177

<sup>5</sup> Clark, CM. The truth about cats and dogs: vaccinations, licenses, service, revenue. Popular Government; Winter 2002: 40-47.

<sup>6</sup> New Hanover County (NC) Animal Control Services/New Hanover County (NC) Health Department originally developed this list of supplies, and the Animal Information Form, for rabies vaccination clinics.

## Acknowledgements:

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