



# Infection Prevention and Control Best Practices

## *For Small Animal Veterinary Clinics*

Dear veterinary staff member,

We are conducting a brief online survey to understand your current infection control practices and your motivation for seeking out these guidelines. Participation in the survey is strictly voluntary. You may exit the survey at any time, and you may skip any questions you wish. All responses are anonymous

This survey should only take approximately 2-3 minutes to complete. We would greatly appreciate your feedback.

Click this link to start the survey:

[https://uoguelph.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_6DbIPOk3dZnLbQ9](https://uoguelph.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6DbIPOk3dZnLbQ9)

# Appendix: Management of Rabies Suspects

Animals with acute neurological disease are commonly encountered in companion animal practice. Although in most developed countries it is rare for these animals to have rabies, rabies must be considered in many situations due to the potential devastating consequences of human exposure to the rabies virus. It is important to err on the side of caution when determining whether to declare an animal a “rabies suspect.” A history of rabies vaccination should not be used to rule out the possibility of rabies. Factors to consider if an animal is exhibiting signs consistent with rabies include:

- risk of previous exposure to a rabid animal.
- travel to or importation from areas where rabies is endemic.
- clinical course (rabies typically causes death within 10 days of initial clinical signs in companion animals, and signs are always progressive).
- vaccination history, as it may reduce risk and make rabies a less likely diagnosis. However, no vaccine is 100% effective and other risk factors must be taken into consideration.
- other differential diagnoses that may explain the cause of the neurological signs.

These recommendations are based on current procedures for rabies response in Ontario, Canada. Veterinary clinics should confirm and follow their own jurisdiction’s guidelines.

**Local and national requirements regarding potential rabies cases may vary, but every veterinary clinic needs to be aware of proper procedure in its area, which should be prominently displayed for clinic staff, and include current contact information for the appropriate authorities.**



## **If an animal is suspected of having rabies:**

1. Notify the owner that rabies is being considered. The owner should be told about the potential for zoonotic transmission, and be asked to make a list of individuals who have been in contact with the animal recently and whether the animal has bitten anyone in the past 10 days. This information should be documented in the medical record.
2. Notify the clinic’s Infection Control Practitioner or equivalent.
3. Notify the relevant local animal health and public health authorities. Local and national requirements regarding potential rabies cases may vary, but every veterinary clinic needs to be aware of proper procedure in its area, which should be prominently displayed for clinic staff, and include current contact information for the appropriate authorities.
  - a. As an example, in Canada rabies is a federally reportable disease, but the response system varies between provinces. In Ontario, in a case of domestic animal exposure to a potentially rabid animal, the attending veterinarian (not the owner) should contact the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). If there was human exposure, the veterinarian, victim or the victim’s physician must contact the local public health unit as soon as possible.
4. Place the animal under strict isolation with a clear warning sign that the animal is not to be handled unless directed by the attending veterinarian. **Entry into isolation and treatment of the patient should be limited to the minimum number of personnel necessary.**

5. Place a “Rabies Suspect” sheet on the cage door. The names of all personnel coming into contact with the animal should be recorded on this sheet.
6. If additional diagnostics or treatments are required, inform all staff that the animal is a rabies suspect. Personnel should not be forced to handle the animal if they are not comfortable doing so. Ideally, only people who have been vaccinated against rabies should be involved in the animal’s care.
7. Avoid procedures likely to result in contact with saliva or cerebral spinal fluid.
8. Anyone handling the animal must wear protective clothing including gloves, gown and face protection. Ensure that any areas of broken skin are securely protected by a bandage or other clothing.
9. Rabid animals can have very unpredictable behavior; employ additional precautions such as the use of catch poles and heavy gloves as needed to reduce the risk of bite injury occurring.
10. Do not euthanize the animal unless it is in extremis, or authorized to do so by the owner and the appropriate authorities.
11. If an individual is exposed through a bite or potential salivary contamination of a wound or mucous membrane:
  - a. Immediately and thoroughly wash the wound/area with copious amounts of soap and water. Allow small wounds to bleed to help flush any virus from the tissues.
  - b. Apply an antiseptic such as chlorhexidine gluconate or povidone iodine. The rabies virus is very fragile and susceptible to most antiseptics.
  - c. Seek medical attention in order to receive rabies post-exposure prophylaxis as soon as possible.
  - d. Report all bites to the local public health unit, or other appropriate agency, depending on the jurisdiction.
12. If rabies is ultimately confirmed, public health personnel will determine the need for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis for each individual who had contact with the animal, depending on the circumstances for each.

More information on rabies response in Ontario, Canada can be found on the OMAFRA website (see References below).

## References

Brown CM, et al. Compendium of animal rabies prevention and control, 2016. J Am Vet Med Assoc. 2016;248(5):505-17. Available at: <http://nasphv.org/Documents/NASPHVRabiesCompendium.pdf>. Accessed Dec-2018.

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). Rabies in Ontario. Available at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/ahw/rabies.htm>. Accessed Dec-2018.