



Onondaga County Health Department

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Fact Sheet Concerning Rabies and 45 Day and 4-Month Quarantine

What is Rabies?

Rabies is a fatal viral infection that affects the nervous system of mammals. It is usually transmitted by the bite of an infected animal. The incubation period, the period between exposure to the disease and onset of symptoms, ranges from two weeks to many months. Rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms occur.

What are the symptoms of Rabies?

The first sign of rabies is usually a change in the animal's behavior. The rabies virus attacks the part of the brain that controls behavior. The animal may become unusually aggressive or unusually tame. Staggering, convulsions, spitting, choking, frothing at the mouth, and paralysis are sometimes noted. If your pet becomes sick or dies within the quarantine period, contact Animal Disease Prevention at (315) 435-3165.

How do I protect my pets?

The New York State Public Health Law states that all cats and dogs must be given initial rabies vaccine at 3 months of age and a rabies booster one year later. At that point a rabies vaccination is then needed every three years. Ferrets must be vaccinated yearly. Animals too young to be vaccinated should be kept indoors. Make sure to keep your pets up-to-date on their rabies vaccine, it's the law and can help prevent any unnecessary exposure to the virus.

What do if my pet is exposed?

Already vaccinated pets that have come in contact with a potentially rabid animal such as a raccoon, skunk, fox or bat should receive a booster dose of vaccine within five days of exposure. Animals not protected by a current vaccination must be euthanized or strictly quarantined.

What am I required to do if a 45 day or 4-month quarantine is approved for my pet?

The pet can be quarantined at your home. The animal needs to be maintained in a locked enclosure inside the home. In the case of dogs you can provide a locked enclosure outdoors that is constructed so that there is no exposure to any other animal or human except for the person caring for the pet. The Bureau of Animal Disease will check monthly on your pet to ensure it is still being quarantined. At the end of the quarantine period, your pet needs to be checked by local Health Department Staff or a licensed veterinary to deem the pet alive and not displaying any signs or symptoms of rabies.

Contact Animal Disease Prevention at (315) 435-3165 or animaldisease@ongov.net with any questions.

