

Animal Rabies Vaccine

Frequently Asked Questions



What animals can receive the rabies vaccine?

A rabies vaccine has been licensed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for cats, dogs, ferrets, cattle, horses, and sheep.

At what age can an animal receive the rabies vaccine?

Most vaccines are licensed for 3 months of age and older. State law mandates animals be vaccinated by a licensed veterinarian by 4 months of age, and at regular intervals thereafter according to the label directions.

If this is my animal's first rabies vaccine, how soon after vaccination is the vaccine considered current?

After 28 days, your animal is considered to be currently vaccinated and protected.

If my animal has been previously vaccinated by a licensed veterinarian, how soon after vaccination is the vaccine considered current?

Immediately after the second vaccination. However, you need to keep records for each rabies vaccination.

What is the difference between a 1-year and 3-year vaccine?

What makes the 1-year and 3-year vaccine different is the number of years the vaccine is considered protective according to the license obtained by the company. Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) interprets the animal's vaccination status based on whether a 1-year or 3-year vaccine was given, dates of any previous vaccine(s), and whether the doses were given by a licensed veterinarian.

Does OSDH recognize a 3-year vaccine for an animal bite or exposure to a rabid animal?

Yes. If an animal was exposed to a laboratory confirmed rabid animal or bites a person, OSDH recognizes a 3-year vaccine if the animal was vaccinated according to the vaccine label directions and the vaccine was given by a licensed veterinarian.

Does each city recognize the 3-year vaccine for animal bites?

No, not every city in Oklahoma will recognize a 3-year vaccine when evaluating an animal bite to a human. Check with your local animal control or enforcement agency to ask if a 3-year rabies vaccine is recognized to consider a pet currently vaccinated. Verify the local rules by requesting a written copy of the ordinance.

Once my animal receives a 3-year vaccine, is it current?

For dogs and cats, it depends on if this is the first vaccine the animal has ever received, or if it is a booster dose. If this is the first vaccine the dog/cat has ever received, then your animal will be considered current beginning 28 days after the vaccine was administered and up to a year after vaccination. Then they will need a booster vaccine to be considered current for the duration the vaccine is licensed.

If your dog/cat has previously received a rabies vaccine, then once it receives a 3-year rabies booster, it will immediately be considered current and remain current for 3 years from the date of that vaccination.

For other animals, refer to vaccination licensing.

What if my animal is one day overdue on the rabies vaccine, will the state still recognize the vaccine?

Recommendations on animals with overdue rabies vaccination who are exposed to a rabid animal will be based on guidance from the current rabies compendium.

My local ordinance for an animal bite is different from the state administrative law. What vaccine requirement do I have to follow?

Check with your local animal control or enforcement agency about their requirements. If the local ordinance is more strict than the state, then the local ordinance must be followed.

Does the state recognize a rabies vaccine if I vaccinate my own animal?

No. OSDH can only recognize a vaccination administered by a licensed veterinarian.

A licensed veterinarian is appropriately trained in vaccine storage, handling, administration, and in the management of adverse events. This ensures a qualified and responsible person can be held accountable for properly vaccinating the animal.

Should I keep a copy of my animals vaccine records?

Yes. It is recommended you keep a copy of the last two rabies vaccinations. Vaccine history must be verified by an official record or by the veterinarian to be recognized.

Do I need to vaccinate my livestock?

State law does not require rabies vaccination of horses or livestock. However, the Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control recommends vaccinating horses, livestock with frequent contact to humans, and any valuable livestock. It is recommended to vaccinate species that a licensed vaccine is not available for if these animals come in frequent contact with humans. Some dairy farms choose to vaccinate their dairy cows due to frequent human interaction and the potential public health risk of unpasteurized dairy products from a rabid dairy cow. You will need to speak with your veterinarian about the appropriate vaccine to use for these animals.

Protect yourself, your family, your employees, and your investment by vaccinating your livestock. Each year we have livestock in Oklahoma that test positive for rabies.

My animal lives indoors, does it need to be vaccinated for rabies?

Yes. Indoor dogs/cats/ferrets must be vaccinated for rabies by your veterinarian. "Inside" pets have been exposed to rabies when they've run outside, or when rabid animals have entered a home (for example: bats).

Since my animal came from a shelter, was it vaccinated?

Check with the shelter. Not all shelters vaccinate pets for adoption against rabies, or keep records regarding rabies vaccination. Please check with the shelter when you pick up your pet. If there is not an official rabies vaccination record, take your new pet to a licensed veterinarian as soon as possible to have it vaccinated for rabies.

My animal received their "shots" at a young age. Did those "shots" contain the rabies vaccine?

Check with your veterinarian. The animal may have been too young to receive the rabies vaccine during their initial vaccinations. Do not assume that the rabies vaccine was given - be sure you have documentation.

Key Points:

- **Animals must be vaccinated with a rabies vaccine by a licensed veterinarian for the animal to be considered appropriately vaccinated and recognized by the OSDH.**
- **The earliest most pets can be vaccinated is 3 months of age (based on vaccine license).**
- **Within 28 days after initial vaccination, an animal is considered currently immunized.**
- **OSDH will only recognize the 1-year or 3-year rabies vaccine based on the USDA licensed duration of immunity.**
- **For a 3-year vaccine the animal needs a rabies booster dose 1 year later if this is the first vaccine in their life.**
- **Check your local city ordinances to determine how frequently your pet requires rabies vaccine booster.**
- **Keep your animals up to date on their rabies vaccinations.**
- **Keep rabies vaccination records for the last 2 vaccines provided by your veterinarian.**
- **If you have expensive animals (such as livestock), protect your investment by vaccinating your animals.**
- **Save your pets' lives by having them vaccinated and keeping their rabies vaccination up to date!**