

UPDATE: North Carolina Rabies Laws Amended, Effective October 1, 2009

Chapter 130A. Public Health, Article 6. Rabies

The 2009 General Assembly changes updated the rabies laws to conform to current recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians' Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, 2008, see: www.nasphv.org/Documents/RabiesCompendium.pdf. The amended law can be accessed at www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2009/Bills/Senate/PDF/S674v7.

Highlights

- Areas of the law that previously referred to *dogs and cats* now refer to *animal(s)* and include ferrets.
- The terms stray and feral are defined and have been added to G.S. 130A-184 Definitions.
- Rabies vaccination requirements for animals imported into North Carolina are revised. Dogs, cats and ferrets are considered *currently vaccinated* if they are accompanied by a rabies vaccination certificate that is: signed by a licensed veterinarian, indicates that a USDA licensed rabies vaccine approved by the Commission was used, and that the *vaccine has not expired*, 1-year, 3 year or 4 year vaccine.
- Vaccination status of animals exposed to rabid animals: Under G.S. 130A-197 Infected animals to be destroyed; protection of vaccinated animals., an animal exposed to rabies shall be considered currently vaccinated if the owner can furnish a valid rabies certificate that indicates the animal was vaccinated in compliance with North Carolina G.S. 130A-185 *more than 28 days* prior to the exposure to the rabid animal and that the animal was *administered a rabies vaccine within 5 days of the exposure*.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Were any definitions changed in G.S. 130A-184?

- Yes, the definitions of **animal control officer**, **dog**, **cat**, and **vaccination** were changed.
 - The definition of **animal control officer** was changed to mean a city or county employee whose responsibility includes animal control.
 - The definitions of **dog** is a domestic canine (*Canis lupus familiaris*) and **cat** a domestic feline (*Felis catus*) now include the genus, species, and subspecies if applicable, to more clearly differentiate domestic from feral breeds.
 - **Vaccination** is generalized to mean the administration of rabies vaccine by a person authorized to administer it under G.S. 130A-185.

Are there any new definitions in G.S. 130A-184?

- Yes, the new definitions incorporated into the law are: **feral**, **ferret**, and **stray**.
 - **Feral** is defined as an animal that is not socialized.
 - A **ferret** is defined as a domestic mammal of the genus, species and subspecies *Mustela putorius furo*.
 - A **stray** is an animal that meets both of the following conditions: a.) is beyond the limits of confinement and, b.) is not wearing any tags, microchips, tattoos, or other methods of identification.

Are ferrets now required to be vaccinated against rabies?

- Yes, according to G.S. 130A-185, owners of domestic dogs, cats, *and ferrets* over four months of age shall have their animal(s) vaccinated against rabies.

Is it true that registered veterinary technicians can now administer rabies vaccine in North Carolina?

- Yes, G.S. 130A-185 states that in addition to licensed veterinarians, and certified rabies vaccinators, registered veterinary technicians may administer rabies vaccine under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian.
- Both the registered veterinary technician administering the vaccine and the supervising veterinarian shall sign the rabies vaccination certificate and provide their North Carolina Board of Veterinary Medicine registration and license numbers, respectively, on the certificate.

Can ferrets be vaccinated at local county rabies vaccination clinics?

- Yes, according to GS 130A-187 County rabies vaccination clinics., the local health director is required to organize or assist county departments to organize at least one countywide rabies vaccination clinic per year for the purpose of vaccinating dogs, cats *and ferrets*.

Can ferrets be vaccinated by Certified Rabies Vaccinators?

- Yes. Certified Rabies Vaccinators may now vaccinate ferrets, in addition to dogs, and cats.
- In accordance with 10A NCAC 41G .0101, rabies vaccines administered to dogs, cats and ferrets by Certified Rabies Vaccinators shall expire *one year* from the date of vaccination regardless of the manufacturer's recommendations on the product's package insert and the previous vaccination status of the animal vaccinated
- Certified Rabies Vaccinators shall not vaccinate any other species even if there is a USDA licensed rabies vaccination for that species because only rabies vaccination of dogs, cats and ferrets will be legally recognized.

Were any changes made regarding rabies vaccine fees for local county rabies vaccination clinics?

- Yes, addressed under G.S. 130A-187 (b.), the county board of commissioners still has the authority to establish a fee for rabies vaccinations given at a county rabies clinic. The fee may consist of a maximum charge of \$10.00 (an increase from \$4.00) for administration and storage of the vaccine, in addition to the actual cost of the rabies vaccine, certificate and tag. The fee structure was updated last in 1983.

Are ferrets required to have rabies certificates and tags?

- Yes, according to G.S. 130A-189, an original rabies vaccination certificate and a rabies vaccination tag shall be issued by the person that administers the rabies vaccine to the owner of the animal that receives the rabies vaccine.
- An original copy of the rabies vaccination certificate shall be given to (1.) the owner for each animal vaccinated; in addition a copy shall be retained by (2.) the licensed veterinarian that administers or supervises vaccine administration by a registered veterinary technician, or the certified rabies vaccinator that administers the vaccine; and a copy shall be retained by (3.) the county agency responsible for animal control.
- Like cats, ferrets are required to wear rabies vaccination tags unless they are exempted by a local ordinance. Dogs shall wear rabies tags at all times.

Have the animal importation requirements changed under G.S. 130A-193?

- Yes, important changes have been made this year (last updated 1983).
- Ferrets are now regulated by the importation requirements like dogs and cats.
- Dogs, cats and ferrets are considered *currently vaccinated* against rabies if they are accompanied by a rabies certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian, indicating a USDA licensed rabies vaccine approved by the Commission was used, and that the animal's rabies vaccine has not expired (*either a one year, three year or four year USDA licensed rabies vaccine that has not expired.*)
- Unchanged is the requirement that animals brought into North Carolina and not currently vaccinated shall immediately be securely confined, vaccinated within one week of entry, and remain confined for two weeks after vaccination. Exhibition animals are exempt if they are confined and not permitted to run at large.

How are stray and feral animals addressed in the new laws?

- **G.S. 130A- 194 Quarantine of districts infected with rabies.** When a rabies quarantine has been declared by a local health director, animal control or a peace officer shall have the right, after making reasonable efforts to apprehend stray or feral animals that continue to run uncontrolled, to destroy them.
- A new requirement was added under G.S. 130A-196, if a stray or feral animal bites a person the local animal control agency shall make a reasonable attempt to identify the animal's owner within 72 hours of the event. If the owner cannot be located within 72 hours, the local health director may authorize euthanasia and the head shall be shipped to the State Laboratory Public Health for rabies testing. If the biting event occurs on a weekend or State holiday, the period is extended 24 hours to find the owner.