

Protocol for Domestic Animal that Bites / Scratches a Person or another Domestic Animal

Definitions (330 CMR 10.00)

Quarantine - Confinement of a domestic animal from humans and other animals for the purpose of observing the animal for signs of rabies and minimizing chances of the animal spreading rabies to humans or other animals. This includes isolation and strict confinement.

Strict Confinement a) Animal may be kept at home in an escape-proof, solid walled building with a roof, approved by the Animal Inspector of the municipality. b) Animal may be leash walked by an adult or under the direct supervision of an adult. c) Owner informed of potential rabies risk and given instructions in writing. d) Owner required to notify veterinarian and Animal Inspector of unusual behavior or change in health status of pet.

Signs of Rabies - Unexplained aggression, impaired locomotion, varying degrees of paralysis, extreme depression or viciousness. The signs of rabies vary in animals. Some will display attack-like behavior while others appear sick or dazed.

Why do we need to quarantine a biting/scratching animal?

Rabies is prevalent in our area in raccoons, skunks, bats, and other wildlife. Domestic animals and humans are both susceptible to rabies.

Rabies is virtually 100% fatal when animals and humans are infected.

Dogs and cats are not supposed to bite people and other animals. Biting and aggression can be a sign of rabies and the disease is most often transmitted through a bite.

For the protection of public health, if a dog or cat bites/scratches a person or other domestic animal, it is considered a 'suspect rabid animal'. A bite or scratch that breaks the skin is considered a possible exposure to rabies. The biting dog or cat will be quarantined to observe its health status. A biting dog or cat that remains apparently healthy for at least 10 days following the incident could not have been rabid at the time of the bite. That confirms that the bite victim is not at risk from the rabies virus.

No vaccine is 100% effective, so even vaccinated dogs or cats that bite must be quarantined for at least 10 days.

The rabies quarantine is NOT over until the Animal Inspector views the animal and releases it. Your municipal Animal Inspector will schedule a time to view the animal and confirm that it appears free from signs of rabies and release the quarantine. You will receive a copy of the quarantine release slip at that time.

Owner/Caretaker Quarantine Regulations

Animals under this type of quarantine may still be leashed-walked under adult supervision, including walking off the property. (*Unless otherwise noted on the order of quarantine). The purpose of this quarantine is to prevent any unnecessary contact with other people and animals outside the house, so extra care should be taken to prevent the animal from interacting with other animals or public while under quarantine. Walking around the block is fine, but make sure to keep the dog away from others. During the quarantine do not bring the dog to dog parks, puppy classes or any other gathering spots where close interactions are unavoidable. Separation within the home is up to the owner; it is not required.

We are observing quarantined animals to see if they start showing signs of illness. As a result, we want to avoid unnecessary veterinary care or treatment during this time, but we never deny medical care. Some animals have a slight reaction to the rabies vaccine and can lose their appetite or become lethargic. These can be similar to early signs of rabies. In order to avoid confusion, unvaccinated animals or those that are not currently vaccinated should wait until they've been released from the quarantine before being vaccinated.

We are monitoring the animal for signs of rabies. If there are changes in health or behavior, then the animal needs to be seen by your veterinarian. When seeking veterinary care, you will need to tell your veterinarian's office about the quarantine before showing up, so that the facility can make appropriate arrangements to avoid additional exposures.

Any animal that dies or is euthanized during the quarantine must be tested for rabies. (*Please immediately notify the municipal animal inspector to confirm rabies testing indications. There are waiver request opportunities for specific rabies exposures cases.)

The order of quarantine serves as proof that the pet was observed and appeared healthy at least 10 days after the incident. This confirms that the victim was not exposed to rabies and does not need post exposure shots. If anything, complying with the quarantine protects an owner to prove that your pet is not infectious with the rabies virus at the time of incident.

The quarantine order is NOT proof of bite. The quarantine is for public health/medical advisement and serves to confirm the victim was not exposed to the rabies virus in an alleged incident. The quarantine order is not public record. Copies should only be held by the owner, the animal inspector, and MDAR. The owner may share their copy of the order as needed.

Any violation of a quarantine order may result in fines or further penalty.

Contact Information:

- Questions or concerns should be directed to your Municipal Animal Inspector



<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/municipal-animal-inspectors-and-animal-control-officers>

For Further Questions:

- Domestic Animal Questions: MDAR Rabies Program Coordinator, Ashley Kraft
Ashley.Kraft@mass.gov or (617) 626-1810
- Human Health Questions: MDPH Division of Epidemiology
(617) 983-6800 (available 24 hours)

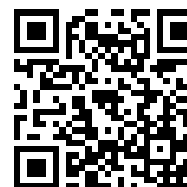
For Further Information:

- Rabies Exposure Protocols and Regulations



<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/rabies-protocols-and-regulations>

- General Rabies Information



<https://www.mass.gov/rabies>