



Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine

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Rabies Vaccination Guidance Document

In September 2011, the Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine conducted a study to gather information on the rabies vaccination practices of Minnesota licensed veterinarians in companion animals. The following are the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the board from the data gathered in the study. This document is to serve as a guidance document and reference for Minnesota licensed veterinarians and the public.

Conclusions

1. Of the Minnesota licensed veterinarians who responded to the survey, 89% use a USDA licensed rabies vaccine with a three-year duration of immunity for dogs and cats.
2. Of these veterinarians, 39% are administering rabies vaccine more often than every three years.
3. The majority of veterinarians inform the client of the labeled duration of immunity for the rabies vaccine administered.
4. Most veterinarians base their decision to vaccinate more often than the labeled duration of immunity upon: (a) the veterinarian's belief that more frequent rabies vaccination was required by the local/regional ordinances addressing companion animal licensing and rabies vaccination; (b) the likelihood of rabies exposure; and/or (c) the desire to prevent the rabies vaccination from becoming overdue.
5. Veterinarians who utilize a vaccine with a three-year labeled duration of immunity but nevertheless choose to vaccinate more often do not always indicate on the rabies vaccination certificate that the labeled duration of immunity is three years.
6. There is little evidence that the practice of administration of rabies vaccine more often than every three years is motivated by financial gain or a desire to deceive the owner.
7. The documents reviewed do not show that administration of rabies vaccine more often than the labeled duration of immunity creates a significant risk of harm.
8. The most appropriate way to address these rabies vaccination practices is through education of all Minnesota licensed veterinarians.

Recommendations

1. The Board should pursue opportunities to educate Minnesota licensed veterinarians on the recommendations and protocols for rabies vaccination of companion animals. Rabies vaccination recommendations and protocols should be scientifically-based from unbiased sources. The Committee has identified the NASPHV [*Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control*](#) as an appropriate reference document.
2. If a veterinarian chooses to exercise his/her professional medical judgment to adopt other rabies vaccination protocols or schedules, the decision should be based on credible, scientifically-based information. This information and documentation should be in the possession of the veterinarian and available for review if requested.
3. If a veterinarian adopts other rabies vaccination protocols or schedules, the veterinarian should disclose to the animal owner that this is his/her medical recommendation and it is not based on the rabies vaccine labeled duration of immunity. The veterinarian should document the informed consent in the animal's medical record.
4. The rabies vaccination certificate should always comply with Minnesota Rule 1705.1146, including displaying the date of vaccination and the rabies vaccine labeled duration of immunity, even if the veterinarian recommends more frequent rabies vaccination.
5. Veterinarians should not adopt rabies vaccination recommendations and protocols based on actual or perceived client compliance with the rabies vaccination schedule. It is the animal owner's responsibility to ensure that the animal's rabies vaccination status is current.
6. Veterinarians should not adopt rabies vaccination recommendations and protocols based solely upon local/regional animal licensing ordinances which prescribe rabies vaccination frequency. It is the animal owner's responsibility to meet the requirements of local/regional animal licensing requirements.