

Canine Rabies Vaccination Exemption Requests

Background

On January 1, 2012 California State Law began allowing rabies vaccination exemptions if approved by the Local Health Officer (LHO). In Orange County, the LHO has delegated this responsibility to OC Animal Care.

Health and Safety Code 121690 states in part that an exemption may be granted for the rabies vaccine on an annual basis if “a rabies vaccination would endanger the dog’s life”. The law also requires the condition warranting the exemption be verified and documented by a veterinarian.



Important Information

- Our office has worked to develop consistent standards for reviewing requests, referring to published literature on adverse reactions to rabies vaccinations in dogs.
- In accordance with Health and Safety Code 121690, the exemption is valid for one year, after which the animal must either be vaccinated for rabies or another request must be submitted and approved.
- OC Animal Care has jurisdiction over all rabies related issues in the County of Orange regardless of whether your city is serviced by another animal care and control department. As a result, all exemption requests must be approved by OC Animal Care.
- We accept rabies vaccination exemption requests only from veterinarians.
- If you own a cat that is required to be licensed and rabies vaccinated as a condition of an animal permit, for example, you will follow the same procedure for exemption requests as a dog owner.

Cases where an exemption may be approved include but are not limited to:

- Life-threatening anaphylactic reaction soon after administration of a rabies vaccine:
 - Signs consistent with anaphylactic shock
 - Mild facial angioedema, hives, lethargy and/or localized reactions do **not** qualify as life-threatening
- Immune-Mediated Hemolytic Anemia (IMHA), if:
 - Dog is still within first year after diagnosis, or
 - Onset was within one month of a rabies vaccination, or
 - More than one episode (i.e. relapses)

- Polyradiculoneuropathy if:
 - Dog is still within the first year after diagnosis, or
 - Onset was within one month after rabies vaccination
- Terminal prognosis (dog has fewer than three months to live in the opinion of presiding veterinarian).
- Dog currently on immunosuppressive therapy for cancer or immune-mediated disease (low dose prednisone is not considered immunosuppressive therapy).

Exemptions will not be approved in the following cases: Old age, minor reactions to rabies or other vaccinations, positive rabies titers, severe reaction to vaccinations other than rabies, medical condition not documented or no documentation submitted, illegible requests.

- Short term exemptions (e.g. one month exemption for recovery from acute illness). In these cases contact the OC Animal Care Rabies Control Department at (714) 796-6463.

Submitting a Rabies Vaccination Exemption Request

- In accordance with applicable law, owners and their private veterinarians must complete and submit the following forms:
 - State of California's Rabies Vaccination Certificate – Exemption from Canine Rabies Vaccination
 - County of Orange Supplemental Form for Canine Rabies Vaccination Exemption Requests.
- The required forms must be submitted with up to 5 pages of medical records documenting the dog's condition. Written letters from the presiding veterinarian will not be accepted in lieu of medical records.
- Dog owners must sign the Rabies Vaccination Certificate – Exemption from Canine Rabies Vaccination acknowledging they understand the following:
 - The dog must be confined to the owner's premises or must be on a leash not exceeding six feet in length and under the direct control of an adult.
 - The dog should have no contact with any dog or cat that is not currently vaccinated against rabies.
 - The dog will be considered at higher risk for contracting rabies and will be considered legally unvaccinated. This means the animal will be subject to a California state-mandated 180 day quarantine if exposed to a wild animal rather than just 30 days as in the case of a currently rabies vaccinated animal.
- Respond to any requests from OC Animal Care for additional information in a timely manner.
- Owners will be notified of the results of their request by mail.

If you have questions or need assistance with a rabies vaccination exemption request, please contact (714) 796-6463.