



Position Statement Supporting Vaccination Against Rabies for Dogs and Cats

April 2026

The National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) Executive Board and Animal Rabies Prevention and Control Compendium Committee support routine rabies vaccination of all dogs and cats in the United States. Adherence to a regular vaccination schedule is critical to protect animals against rabies from both recognized and unrecognized exposures. NASPHV encourages state and local authorities to establish policies and programs that help to prevent and control rabies, including those that require owners to protect their animals through regular rabies vaccination.

Rabies is a serious and fatal disease of mammals, including people. Prior to the 1950s, rabies was common in dogs in the United States and hundreds of people died from rabies every year. State and local mandates for vaccination of dogs combined with stray animal control programs significantly reduced rabies in dogs and cats by the late 20th century. As a result, fewer than 50 humans have died of rabies in the U.S. since 2000, mostly attributable to wild animal exposures. In countries where dog rabies remains uncontrolled, largely due to inadequate vaccination programs, tens of thousands of people continue to die every year.

Despite these successful control efforts, rabies remains present in wildlife throughout the United States. So, hundreds of dogs and cats die each year in the U.S. following contact with rabid wild animals. Vaccinating pets against rabies protects both the health of the animals and their human family members.

NASPHV encourages the continued science-based veterinary administration of rabies vaccines licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to animals according to recommended schedules. Vaccination of millions of dogs and cats for rabies over the last half century has shown that vaccines approved for use in the U.S. are highly effective and safe. There are several rabies vaccine formulations approved and licensed by the USDA for use in dogs and cats from which veterinarians can select the vaccine that is right for each animal.

NASPHV veterinarians are public health experts and pet-owners who care about the health and happiness of animals and their families. We recognize the importance of regular veterinary care, including vaccination, to prevent illnesses in animals and help ensure that they have long and healthy lives. Maintaining regular rabies vaccination in dogs and cats protects the health of pets, the human members of their families, and the community.

National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians

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