



May 6, 2017

Dear Municipal Partner:

Re: Municipal Role in Potential Rabies Follow-Up

The health unit has a responsibility to follow up all animal bites/scratches that occur within the tri-county area as a precaution to mitigate potential rabies infection. The municipality has the responsibility to assist the Health Unit when required to ensure that rabies infections are mitigated in humans. Rabies can only be ruled out if an animal is alive and well 10 days after a biting/scratching incident or by testing for rabies in the brain tissue of the deceased animal in question.

All animal bites reported to the Health Unit undergo a risk assessment to determine if the person bitten is at risk of contracting the rabies virus. It is important to remember that domestic animals bite/scratch for many reasons and usually not as a result of suffering from the rabies virus. When a domestic animal (pet) has bitten a person the pet is typically confined at the animal owner's home and the health of the animal is closely monitored for symptoms of rabies. In consultation with the Health Unit and under very specific circumstances animals may require euthanasia and can then be tested for rabies virus. Domestic animals must not be destroyed without first consulting with the health unit. If the pet cannot be confined at the owner's home safely, or the pet owner is uncooperative, or the animal is a stray, the municipality has the responsibility for confining the cat or dog.

The excerpt below is taken from the Health Protection and Promotion Act R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 557 Communicable Diseases – General. It describes your municipal responsibility for assisting the Health Unit in preventing rabies transmission to humans. We would specifically like to draw to your attention 2 (b).

- (2) A medical officer of health who is of the opinion that a dog or cat may be rabid shall cause the dog or cat to be confined and isolated for at least ten days from all animals and persons, except the person caring for the dog or cat,
 - (a) At the place of residence of the person caring for the dog or cat, if the dog or cat is free from symptoms of any disease; or
 - (b) In a pound or veterinary hospital **at the expense of the municipality** in which the person caring for the dog or cat resides if the dog or cat exhibits symptoms of any disease or if, in the opinion of the medical officer of health, the person is unlikely to confine and isolate the dog or cat. R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 557, s. 3 (2).

- (3) Despite subsection (2), the medical officer of health,
 - (a) May require the detention of a dog or cat for the purpose of a veterinary examination for evidence of rabies and based on the results of the examination may cause the dog or cat to be confined and isolated for such period as is necessary to determine that the dog or cat is free from symptoms of rabies; or
 - (b) May require the destruction of any animal at any time for the purpose of having a laboratory examination to determine if the animal is in the infective stage of rabies. R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 557, s. 3 (3).
- (4) In the case of a dog or cat, clause (3) (b) only applies where the dog or cat is unclaimed or where permission is given by the owner for the destruction of the dog or cat. R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 557, s. 3 (4).
- (5) The costs of a veterinary examination or destruction referred to in subsection (4) shall be borne by the municipality in which the animal is detained or the destruction is performed. R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 557, s. 3 (5).

Should you become aware of a person who has been bitten by either a wild or domestic animal it is imperative for the person's health that you report the incident right away so that appropriate actions can be taken by the Health Unit. Our reporting form is included for your convenience. This form is also available electronically at: http://www.healthunit.org/professionals/rd_toolkit/Rabies.pdf.

Although we have yet to have any current reported cases of raccoon rabies within our Health Unit jurisdiction we must remain vigilant. It is likely that we could see the raccoon strain of rabies in our Health Unit given our close proximity to the New York State. Your continued assistance is vital in achieving our common goal of preventing rabies exposure in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Counties. Please share this letter with animal control/bylaw, municipal police, and any other relevant municipal departments.

Should you have any questions regarding rabies prevention, please feel free to contact to me.

Your Partner in Public Health,



Claire Farella RN, BScN, MN
Manager Community Health Protection
613-345-5685 Office / 613-345-7148 Fax

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