

News



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Connecticut Department of Public Health
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DPH ANNOUNCES NEW RABIES TESTING GUIDELINES

Hartford – Starting July 1st, the state Department of Public Health’s (DPH) State Laboratory in Rocky Hill no longer provides state-funded testing of rabid wild animals suspected of infecting domestic pets but where there was no human exposure. DPH’s State Lab will continue to provide and pay for rabies testing of any wild or domestic animal suspected of carrying rabies if humans have been exposed.

According to DPH, the new policy will require pet owners to pay for the costs of testing potentially rabid animals who may have infected their pet. This primarily affects owners whose pets have not been properly vaccinated since these pets are placed in quarantine for up to 6 months while vaccinated pets can be observed at home for 45 days.

DPH stressed that the change in testing was not a result of state budget cuts.

“The mission of the Department is to protect human health, and this change was made to keep us aligned with that mission. Any potentially rabid animal that comes in contact with a human resulting in an exposure according to national guidelines will continue to be tested in our lab,” said Dr. Jafar Razeq, DPH State Laboratory Director. “Pet owners who keep their pets’ rabies vaccinations up to date as required by state law will not be impacted by this change.”

As was the practice prior to July 1st, pet owners can opt to pay to have their unvaccinated pet quarantined for 6 months to watch for infection or euthanize their pet. Pet owners were already required to pay for either quarantining or euthanizing their pets. Owners who wish to have the wild animal tested for rabies can take the animal to the University of Connecticut’s Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory, which will test the wild animal for a modest fee. If the wild animal tests negative the pet can be vaccinated and avoid quarantine.

During 2014-2015, 957 raccoons, skunks, groundhogs and opossums were tested for rabies and represent the majority of wild animals tested. Of those animals tested, 69% involved only domestic pet exposure, not human exposure.

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