

Rabies- Frequently Asked Questions

1. *What is the minimum age at which authorities will consider a vaccination to be valid for a puppy?*

Three months of age.

[California Health and Safety Code Section 121690\(b\)](#)

2. *Do dogs legally have to be vaccinated for Rabies in California?*

Yes. The law states that regardless of the age of the dog at primary vaccination, a booster vaccination should be given one year later. All vaccines approved for use in dogs in California follow a three-year booster schedule thereafter. Dogs must be vaccinated with a vaccine procured from a licensed veterinarian and approved by the California Department of Public Health.

[California Health and Safety Code Section 121690\(b\)](#)

California Code of Regulations, Title 17, Sections [2606.4](#) and [2606.6](#).

3. *Where do I find a list of Rabies vaccines approved by the California Department of Public Health?*

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) maintains a compendium that can be accessed [here](#).

4. *Are there any exemptions to the canine rabies vaccination requirement?*

Yes. The law states that, at the discretion of the local health officer, a dog owner may be exempted from having their dog receive a rabies vaccination if they can document that the dog may experience a significant adverse health event as a result of receiving the vaccination. Owners, on an annual basis, must complete and submit a form provided to them by the local health authority along with required documentation. This will include a written statement by a licensed veterinarian explaining the inadvisability of the vaccination and a signed statement by the dog owner affirming that the owner understands the consequences and accepts all liability associated with owning a dog that has not received the canine anti-rabies vaccine.

Here are some more details about the rabies vaccination exemption law:

- The law requires that a veterinarian examine the dog on an annual basis to confirm that the dog should or should not receive the rabies vaccine.
- At the discretion of the local public health officer, exempt dogs shall be confined to the premises of the owner, keeper, or harbinger and when off the premises, shall be in the control of an adult by way of a leash no more than 6 feet long.
- This law also prohibits the license period for an unvaccinated dog from extending beyond one year.

- The law mandates that local health authorities create a rabies vaccine exemption request form that an owner must obtain and submit to authorities in order to comply with provisions of the law. The form must include a signed statement from a veterinarian explaining the inadvisability of the vaccination and a signed statement by the dog owner affirming that the owner understands the consequences and accepts all liability associated with owning an unvaccinated dog.
- Dogs that fall into this category will be considered unvaccinated by health officials.
- Any dog in violation of these legal requirements shall be impounded by the local animal health authority.

[California Health and Safety Code Section 121690\(b\)](#)

5. Do I have to report animal bites? If so, to whom do I report them?

The California Code of Regulations mandates that all bites from animals susceptible to rabies be reported by veterinarians to the local health officer. Any person having knowledge of the whereabouts of an animal known to have or suspected of having rabies shall report the facts immediately to the local health officer. The health officer shall likewise be notified of any person or animal bitten by a rabid or suspected rabid animal.

In those areas declared by the Director of the State Department of Health Services to be rabies areas (see [Section 121585, California Health and Safety Code](#)) the local health officer shall be notified when any person is bitten by an animal of a species subject to rabies, whether or not the animal is suspected of having rabies. [The Director has [declared](#) all 58 counties in California as “rabies areas” every year since 1987.]

For a list of local health authorities (grouped by county) click [here](#).

[California Code of Regulations, Title 17, Section 2606](#)

6. Do I have to report client information to local animal / health authorities when I give a rabies vaccination?

Most likely, yes. Most counties and several cities in California have mandated rabies vaccine reporting by veterinary practices. State law authorizes municipal animal service agencies to collect rabies vaccination information for purposes of rabies tracking and control. To determine your City or County ordinances, browse the [municode.com code library](#) to view local ordinances. To read more about rabies vaccine reporting, see the CVMA article [Rabies Vaccine Reporting is Mandatory- Whether We Like It or Not](#).

7. Can a Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) or Veterinary Assistant administer a rabies vaccine?

Yes. A California licensed veterinarian can administer the rabies vaccine or can delegate the administration of the rabies vaccine, to either a Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) or veterinary assistant. An RVT and/or veterinary assistant can administer the rabies vaccination under either direct or indirect supervision of the California licensed veterinarian.

The veterinarian may delegate supervision of the rabies vaccination administration to a California RVT, but in that instance, the veterinary assistant must work administer the vaccine under the direct supervision the RVT. The levels of supervision are governed by the requirements the California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Division 21, [sections 2034 through 2036.5](#).

8. *Where can I get information about prophylactic rabies vaccines for my staff?*

The CVMA article [Pre-Exposure Rabies Vaccines for Staff](#) has information about the types of vaccines available and how they can be obtained.

9. *How do I get a rabies antibody titer run to determine if I have adequate immunity?*

Every year, the CVMA offers subsidized rabies antibody titer testing at the [Pacific Veterinary Conference](#). If you cannot come to the conference, you can discuss titer testing with your physician. The [Kansas State Rabies Laboratory](#) is the one lab that offers rabies titer testing, but there are also others.

10. *Where can I find information about rabies that I can give to clients?*

Here are some great sources of printable information:

- [CDPH rabies vaccine fact sheet](#)
- [CDPH rabies brochure](#)
- [CDPH rabies fact sheet](#)
- [CDC rabies website](#)

11. *Where can I find more information about Rabies?*

The California Department of Public Health [Rabies Branch](#) has an excellent and informative website. They also publish a compilation of all laws and regulations pertaining to rabies [here](#). For those who would like to take a more “plain English” approach to California rabies laws, the CDPH publishes [The Rabies Compendium](#). Finally, for general information on Rabies, visit the [Center for Disease Control website](#).