

Report on Temporary Facility – Rabies Programs June 19, 2019

1.0 Introduction

Rabies is a well-identified public health risk. Unfortunately, in the past two years, Ontario has seen a marked increase and spread of reported cases, creating significant effort in public education and management at the government level. The College supports veterinary public health initiatives related to animal rabies vaccinations. These initiatives are supported within, and outside of, the traditional Veterinarian-Client-Patient-Relationship inclusive of the issuance of a certificate of accreditation for a temporary facility and the professional standard on rabies programs.

The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association wrote to the College in the summer of 2018 questioning whether in fact all veterinarians, who apply for a certificate of accreditation for a temporary facility for hosting a rabies vaccination program, meet the procedural safeguards included in the rabies program standard, namely:

- The requirement regarding cooperating with local health authorities;
- Inviting local veterinarians to participate in the rabies program held in unaccredited facilities; and
- Asking basic questions about the general health of the animal in order to determine whether or not the animal should be vaccinated.

The College has no information to suggest that temporary rabies programs are not being implemented consistently and meeting the expectations detailed in the standard. However, the College conducted a retrospective random audit to identify what, if any, gaps in the accreditation certificate requirements for rabies programs existed.

2.0 Random Audit

The College randomly selected 50 veterinarians from a list of the temporary certificates of accreditation for rabies programs that were issued in 2016-2018 and held at an unaccredited

location. These veterinarians were sent an electronic survey to complete anonymously. The survey questions were based on the College's expectations as outlined in the Professional Practice Standard – Rabies Programs and Legislative Overview of Rabies. The College received responses from 35 veterinarians.

3.0 Random Audit Results

Overall, the random audit results showed that veterinarians are meeting the procedural safeguards included in the rabies program standard:

- 80% of the respondents contacted their local public health official when hosting a rabies program. The remaining 20% of the respondents indicated that either the township office contacted public health directly or public health would contact the veterinarian directly to invite them to host a rabies program. Either way it was evident that a system was in place for the local public health official to be involved;
- 77% of the respondents invite local veterinarians to participate in the rabies programs held at unaccredited facilities. The remaining 23% indicated that either the public health official would invite the local veterinarian or there was little interest shown by nearby veterinarians to participate, which created fatigue in the direct veterinarian to veterinarian request; and
- 100% of the respondents either conduct a brief history and exam, or a full physical examination prior to vaccinating the animal.

Other interesting information provided by the respondents included that they:

- Had measures in place to ensure adverse events could be managed during the Rabies Program, if necessary. These measures included, having a crash kit on hand with epinephrine, dexamethasone and antihistamine available; making arrangements with the local veterinary hospital nearby; and discussing possible reactions with the owner and providing the contact information for a nearby veterinary hospital.
- Ensured the safe transport of the rabies vaccine and storage prior by keeping the vaccines refrigerated or in coolers with ice packs.
- Maintained infection control practices while hosting the rabies program, i.e. hand washing, use of personal protective equipment, appropriate handling of waste and puncture proof containers for discarding used needles.
- All reported that they retain their records from the Rabies Program for a period of 3 years, i.e. copy of the rabies certificate.

4.0 Summary

The College commends veterinarians who participate in hosting rabies programs. The prevalent theme in the feedback provided by these veterinarians was that they understood the importance of these public health initiatives related to animal rabies vaccinations. It was

evident from the information provided by the respondents that the majority comply with all procedural safeguards included in the rabies program standard. Accordingly, at this time, there are no recommendations to alter the current rabies program related to temporary facilities.

Comments were received related to veterinarians conducting rabies programs in geographic areas where they do not practice day to day. There was no evidence that this demonstrates a public interest concern. Further, comments spoke to a necessity to speak to the public on education related to disease prevention or on continuity of care with a local veterinarian. What is expected of temporary facilities related to rabies is education in rabies vaccination, its timeline of effectiveness, and the issuance of a rabies certificate.

The College will continue to communicate to veterinarians, as a reminder, such requirements as contacting their local public health unit and inviting local veterinarians to participate in a rabies program held at an unaccredited facility

This report was received by the Council of the College on June 19, 2019.