

Rules for Rabies Confinement during an Animal Exposure Investigation

Whenever an animal has been involved in a human biting or scratching incident, it must be confined (or isolated) to monitor its health to ensure it was not infectious with rabies. If the animal stays healthy during this period, we know that it did not have rabies in its saliva at the time of the incident. This means that the person who was bitten or scratched will not need rabies vaccine.

If applicable, a Public Health Inspector will need proof of the animal's rabies immunization status during the investigation. Please do not immunize the animal during the confinement period. Even if the animal is fully immunized, the confinement will still be required.

What does confinement mean?

Confinement means that your animal must be kept separate and apart from contact with other animals or people. It is recommended that one person be responsible for food, water and care of the animal. Avoid direct contact with head and mouth of the animal during the confinement period. You can let your dog out into a fenced back yard or secure to a leash to go outside. You can take your dog for a walk but do not let others pet the dog. Do not take the dog to a dog park.

How long does the animal have to be confined?

- Cats, dogs, or ferrets must be confined for 10 days from the date of the incident.
- Horses, cows, bulls, steers, calves and sheep, must be confined for 14 days from the date of the incident.

What happens during the confinement period?

The animal can be confined at their home, an animal shelter, or a veterinarian clinic. You need to monitor the animal's health for any changes in behavior or for symptoms that may indicate rabies. The animal may exhibit one, all, or a combination of the following signs:

- Trouble walking or standing
- Weakness
- Paralysis
- Seizures
- Difficulty breathing
- Difficulty eating/drinking/swallowing
- Change in vocalizations
- Behavioral changes (aggression, depressed)
- Self-mutilation¹

You must notify the Grey Bruce Health Unit immediately if the animal changes place of confinement, escapes, shows symptoms, or dies during the confinement period.

What happens at the end of the confinement period?

A Public Health Inspector will visit you, and if your animal is in good health (e.g., alive), it will be released from the confinement period. The Public Health Inspector will also notify the person bitten/scratched to advise them they were not exposed to the rabies virus.

¹ Ontario Association Veterinary Technicians. (ND) *What is Rabies?* Retrieved from: <http://oavt.org/view.asp?ccid=558>