



Animal Bites FAQ's

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I'M BITTEN OR SCRATCHED BY AN ANIMAL?

Any time a warm-blooded animal (dog, cat, skunk, fox, bat, etc.,) bites or scratches a person, there is a danger that the animal is infected with rabies. Therefore, the following precautions should be taken:

- Call 311 immediately to capture/quarantine the animal.
- When you call 311, identify the animal. Provide a description of the animal, including color, breed, and the owner's name/contact information, if known. If it is an owned dog, cat or ferret, it must be quarantined and observed for signs of rabies. If it is a wild animal, Animal Care Services will submit the wild animal for laboratory testing.
- Immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and hot water as a first aid procedure.
- Consult a physician as soon as possible to determine whether anti-rabies treatment is needed.

WHEN AN ANIMAL BITES OR SCRATCHES A PERSON, WHO IS IN CHARGE?

- The City of San Antonio designates a State of Texas Certified Animal Care Officer to handle animal bite cases (VTCA-Sec.826.017, DC6-Sec. 3).
- The Animal Care Officer enforces the Rabies Control Law including the Rules of the Texas Board of Health, and enforces the City of San Antonio Code of Ordinances pertaining to animal control (VTCA-Sec. 826.017, CD6-Sec. 3).
- The Animal Care Officer is responsible for investigating animal bites, (VTCA-Sec. 826.017, VTCA-Sec. 826.041(c), TAC-169-.25 (c), CD6-Sec. 6-239 (b)).

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE ANIMAL THAT BITES OR SCRATCHES A PERSON?

Dogs, Cats and Ferrets:

- Regardless of vaccination status, the biting animal must be quarantined for ten (10) days or humanely destroyed. A pet that has current rabies vaccination may be quarantined at home if approved by a Supervisor at Animal Care Services or at a Vet Clinic who has been approved by the State as a quarantine facility. If humanely destroyed, the Animal Care Officer will be required to submit the brain to the State Laboratory for testing. If the animal is to be quarantined, the observation period will be ten (10) twenty-four hour periods or 240 hours from the time of the bite (VTCA-Sec. 826.042, TAC-169.22(19), TAC-169.25(b), TAC-169.27(a), CD6-Sec. 6-240).

High-Risk Animals:

- If the biting animal is a known carrier of rabies, such as skunks, bats, foxes, coyotes or raccoons, they shall be humanely destroyed and submitted for rabies testing (TAC-169.22 (11), TAC-169.27(c), CD6-Sec. 6-240 (e)).

Low-Risk Animals:

- Opossums, shrews, moles, squirrels, gophers, mice, rabbits, rats, and armadillos do not need to be quarantined or tested, unless the Animal Control Officer has reason to believe that the biting animals has rabies (TAC-169.22(18), TAC-169.27(d), CD6-Sec. 6-239(c)).

WHAT IS QUARANTINE?

Quarantine means placing the dog or cat in a State approved facility that provides absolute isolation with no possibility of escape. The quarantine observation period is 10 days from the date of the bite or scratch. After the observation period the dog or cat will be checked by a veterinarian licensed in the state of Texas. If the veterinarian deems the dog or cat healthy, he/she will be released from quarantine. While in quarantine, the dog or cat cannot have contact with other animals or persons and must be observed daily by a qualified person (VTCA-Sec. 826.002(9), TAC-169.27(a), CD6-Sec. 6-240).

WHAT ABOUT HOME QUARANTINE?

1. The Animal Care Officer in charge of the bite case may authorize home quarantine if:
The biting animal was currently vaccinated and was not stray/loose or roaming beyond the owner's property at the time of the bite (VTCA-Sec. 826.002(11), TAC-169.22(A), TAC-169.22(28), TAC-162.27(2), TAC-169.27(4), CD6-Sec 6-2, CD6-Sec. 6-231, CD6-Sec. 6-240(c-2), CD6-Sec. 6-240(c-3)).
2. The victim is a member of the family of the biting animal (VTCA-Sec. 826.015, PPM-S-Pol-IV).
3. The dog/cat owner's personal vet observes the dog/cat at least on the first and last days of the quarantine period (TAC-169.27(3), CD6-Sec. 6-240(c-4)).

Once an animal has been placed in quarantine, only a licensed veterinarian may release the animal from quarantine. If the veterinarian determines that the quarantined animal does not show clinical signs of rabies, they will sign a quarantine release form provided by the Animal Control Division (VTCA-Sec. 826-043(a), CD6-Sec. 6-240(c-4)).

WHAT IF THE ANIMAL GETS SICK OR DIES WHILE IN QUARANTINE?

If the animal becomes sick or dies while in quarantine, Animal Care Services (ACS) will submit the animal for testing to determine if the biting animal exposed the victim to rabies. The victim shall be notified by the City's Metro Health Department if the quarantined animal becomes sick or dies, so that they may receive consultation for treatment of rabies (VTCA-Sec. 826.043(b)).

WHO PAYS FOR QUARANTINE?

Texas State Law requires the owner of a biting animal to pay the cost of quarantine (VTCA-Sec. 286.043(c), CD6-Sec. 6-240(f)).

WHAT IS CONSIDERED CURRENTLY VACCINATED AGAINST RABIES?

- Texas State Law requires that owners of dogs, cats, and ferrets be vaccinated against rabies by four months of age and given a second inoculation against rabies one year later, then tri-annually thereafter (VTCA-Sec. 826.021, TAC-169.29, CD6-Sec. 6-231).
- Texas State Law requires that rabies vaccines for animals must be administered by a licensed veterinarian, or under the direct supervision of a veterinarian. Rabies vaccine can be only sold to veterinarians. Veterinarian cannot legally sell vaccine to their clients. Veterinarians must issue a completed rabies vaccination certificate for dogs, cats and ferrets (VTCA-Sec. 826.021(b), VTCA-Sec. 826.023, TAC-Sec. 169.29(b), CD6-Sec. 6-232).