

Summary of Mississippi Animal Rabies Laws

There are two types of laws, statutes and regulations, that mandate actions in the state of Mississippi to prevent and control rabies. State statutes are laws enacted by a legislative body and these are listed first. Regulations are orders issued by an executive authority of a government and have the force of law. These are the current rabies laws and regulations for the state of Mississippi. The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) has the legal authority to promulgate regulations to enforce the rabies law. The State Veterinarian licenses the vaccines that are approved by MSDH and regulates rabies requirements for animals entering the state of Mississippi. Both agencies follow the recommendations set by the *Compendium of Animal Rabies Control* promulgated and updated by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians.

State Statutes

41-53-1. Rabies inoculation of dogs and cats required. Every person in the state of Mississippi who owns, or has in his or her possession, any dog or cat of the age of three (3) months or over shall have said dog or cat inoculated (vaccinated) against rabies as provided herein with the recommended dosage of an anti-rabic virus (vaccine) approved by the State Board of Health, and it shall be unlawful for any person within the state of Mississippi to own or have in his or her possession within the state of Mississippi any dog or cat three (3) months of age or over which has not been inoculated (vaccinated) against rabies with the approved dosage of an approved anti-rabic virus (vaccine). It shall be the duty of every person in this state so owning or having in his or her possession a dog or cat to have said dog or cat inoculated (vaccinated) immediately after said dog or cat has reached the age of three (3) months, and it shall be said person's further duty to have said dog or cat so inoculated (vaccinated) thereafter as required by the state board of health. For a failure to comply with this section said person shall be subject to the penalties provided in Section 41-53-13.

41-53-5. Who may administer virus.

All inoculations (vaccinations) done in accordance with this chapter must be done by either a licensed veterinarian or other competent person granted a permit to administer virus (vaccine) by the State Board of Health.

41-53-7. Tags.

It shall be the duty of the manufacturer or manufacturers contracted with to furnish virus (vaccine) to furnish with each ampoule (dose) of virus (vaccine), a suitable metal tag approved by the state board of health, which may be securely bradded to the collar of the dog inoculated (vaccinated). Said tag shall have stamped thereon the serial number of vaccination and the year in which said dog was inoculated. This tag shall be furnished to the owner when said dog is inoculated (vaccinated), and it shall be his duty to securely attach same to the collar, and each dog owned by or in the possession of any person within the state of Mississippi shall wear at all times a collar or other device which shall have securely bradded on to it the metal tag provided for above. Any such tag shall not be transferable to any dog other than the dog for which it was issued.

41-53-9. Certificate of inoculation; records.

All persons administering virus (vaccine) in accordance with this chapter shall furnish the owner of each dog or cat inoculated (vaccinated) a certificate of inoculation (vaccination) for each dog or cat inoculated

(vaccinated) indicating the breed of each dog or cat inoculated (vaccinated), the sex of each dog or cat inoculated (vaccinated), and the markings and the serial number of the tag attached to the collar or some other device on each dog. Persons administering virus (vaccine) in accordance with this chapter shall maintain records of each inoculation, indicating the owner of each dog or cat inoculated (vaccinated), the breed of each dog or cat inoculated (vaccinated), the sex of each dog or cat inoculated (vaccinated), and the markings and serial number of the tag furnished to the owner of each dog.

41-53-11. Dogs running at large.

- (1) It shall be lawful and it shall be their duty for any sheriff, conservation officer or peace officer of a county or municipality to kill any dog above the age of three (3) months found running at large on whose neck there is no such collar and tag. No action shall be maintained by the owner for such killing. However, it shall be the duty of said officer who finds a dog or dogs running at large to first keep said dog or dogs for a period of five (5) days and notify the sheriff of said county that he has said dog or dogs, giving the sheriff a description of same. If anyone proves himself to be the owner of same, he shall pay said officer the sum of fifty cents (50¢) before the dog is delivered to the owner.
- (2) It shall be the duty of any sheriff, conservation officer or peace officer of a county or municipality to kill or otherwise destroy any and all dogs above the age of three (3) months which are running at large and have not been inoculated (vaccinated) as required in this chapter.

41-53-13. Penalties.

The failure or refusal of any person to comply with any of the provisions of this chapter shall constitute a misdemeanor, and the offender shall, on conviction thereof, be fined for the first offense in a sum not to exceed five dollars (\$5.00) and for the second offense in a sum not to exceed twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) and for the third offense a sum not to exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00), together with all costs. It shall be the duty of the sheriffs, conservation officers and all peace officers of the counties and municipalities of Mississippi to enforce this chapter. It shall be the duty of the county attorneys and district attorneys of this state to prosecute all violators of this chapter.

41-3-17. Authority for the Mississippi State Board of Health to Make and Publish Rules and Regulations.

The State Board of Health is authorized to make and publish all reasonable rules and regulations necessary to enable it to discharge its duties and powers and carry out the purposes and objectives of its creation, and reasonable sanitary rules and regulations, to be enforced in the several counties by the county health officer under the supervision and control of the State Board of Health.

Mississippi State Department of Health Regulations

Rules and Regulations Governing Reportable Diseases and Conditions

Section XVII Specific Disease Control Measures

The following measures shall be used to control or prevent the included diseases of public health importance. The measures proposed in the sixteenth or later edition of the Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, published by the American Public Health Association shall be considered as supplementary. (*Number 12 in this section refers to Rabies*)

12. Rabies

Class 1 case report required. (*Class 1 diseases are of major public health importance which shall be reported directly to the State Department of Health by telephone within 24*

hours of first knowledge or suspicion. Class 1 diseases and conditions are dictated by requiring an immediate public health response).

Control in Animals

The Mississippi State Department of Health subscribes to the Compendium of Animal Rabies Control, parts I, II, and III, prepared annually by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians. The provisions of this compendium have been endorsed by the CDC, U.S. Public Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services; the American Veterinary Medical Association; the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists; and other public and private agencies. The following are state specific modifications to the Compendium.

Vaccine Administration

All animal rabies vaccines are restricted to use by or under the supervision of a veterinarian or person specifically licensed or designated by the State Board of Health to administer rabies vaccine.

Vaccine Selection

The current Compendium lists vaccines licensed for use in the United States. Only licensed vaccines shall be used. Vaccines selected for immunizing dogs and cats shall be licensed as providing 3-year immunity.

Wildlife Vaccination

Vaccination of wildlife is not recommended since no vaccine is licensed for use in wild animals. Offspring of wild animals bred with domestic dogs or cats are considered wild animals.

Pre-Exposure Vaccination

Dogs and Cats** All dogs and cats shall be vaccinated against rabies at three months of age, revaccinated one year later and every three years thereafter, using a rabies vaccine approved as providing a 3-year immunity.

Post-Exposure Management

Any animal bitten or scratched by a wild, carnivorous mammal or bat that is not available for testing should be regarded as having been exposed to rabies. Dogs, Cats, and Ferrets Unvaccinated dogs, cats, and ferrets exposed to a rabid animal should be euthanized immediately. If the owner is unwilling to have this done, the animal should be placed in strict isolation for 6 months and vaccinated 1 month before being released. Animals with expired vaccinations need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Dogs, cats, and ferrets that are currently vaccinated should be revaccinated immediately, kept under the owner's control, and observed for 45 days.

Management of Animals that Bite Humans

A healthy dog, cat or ferret that bites a person shall be confined and observed for 10 days in a manner acceptable to the local health officer or his or her designee. Rabies vaccine shall not be administered during the observation period. Such animals shall be evaluated by a veterinarian at the first sign of illness during confinement. Any illness in the animal shall be reported immediately to the local health department. If signs suggestive of rabies develop, the animal shall be euthanized, its head removed, and the head shipped under refrigeration to the State Department of Health Laboratory for examination. Any stray or unwanted dog, cat or ferret that bites a person may be euthanized immediately, in lieu of 10 days of observation, and the head submitted as described above for examination. Animals other than dogs, cats, or ferrets that might have exposed a person to rabies should be reported immediately to the health

department. This is not to include low risk animals such as small rodents and lagomorphs (e.g., squirrels, rats, mice, gerbils, and rabbits). Prior vaccination of an animal does not preclude the necessity for euthanasia and testing if the period of virus shedding is unknown for that species. Management of animals other than dogs, cats, and ferrets depends on the species, the circumstances of the bite, the epidemiology of rabies in the area, and the biting animal's history, current health status, and potential for exposure to rabies. The need for euthanizing and testing the animal shall be decided upon consultation with the Division of Epidemiology. Post-exposure management of persons should follow the recommendations of the ACIP.

Although ferrets are not mentioned in this section, the *Compendium of Animal Rabies Control and Prevention* does recommend that ferrets be prevaccinated and therefore it is a recommendation of the State Board of Health as well.

For questions call your local health department or the State Epidemiologist at 601-576-7725.

Mississippi Board of Animal Health Regulations

Animal Rabies Control

The Board of Animal Health adopts as a regulation the *Compendium of Animal Rabies Control* as promulgated and amended by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, with the exception that 1 year rabies vaccines are not allowed for use in dogs and cats in Mississippi. (Adopted April 7, 1993. Amended September 14, 2007.)

Vaccine Administration

All animal rabies vaccines are restricted to use by or under the supervision of a veterinarian or person specifically licensed or designated by the State Board of Health to administer rabies vaccine. (Adopted September 14, 2007.)

Entry Requirements by the Mississippi Board of Animal Health

Rabies Vaccination. All dogs, cats, and ferrets three (3) months or older transported or moved into the state for any purpose shall be accompanied by proof of current rabies vaccination per guidelines outlined in the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians Rabies Compendium. Proof of vaccination must be provided via a rabies vaccination certificate signed by an attending, licensed veterinarian. Mississippi Law requires all dogs and cats to be vaccinated for rabies, using three (3) year vaccine following Rabies Compendium guidelines. For purposes of entry, Mississippi will accept manufacturer recommendations but animals must comply with the three (3) year immunity vaccine requirement if staying in the state or if the animal requires a booster to remain current. Dogs, cats, and ferrets under three (3) months of age may be admitted without rabies vaccination to be quarantined until vaccination at three (3) months of age.

Certificate of Veterinary Inspection. Dogs, cats, and ferrets for exhibition, change of ownership, adoption or unaccompanied by owner, must have an official Certificate of Veterinary Inspection issued by an accredited veterinarian with the following compliance:

1. Apparently healthy and free from all contagious and infectious diseases and recent exposure thereto.
2. Did not originate within an area under quarantine for rabies, or exposed. Dogs, cats, and ferrets accompanied by owner (not for purposes of exhibition, change of ownership, adoption etc.) are

not required to have a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection.
(Amended November 20, 2019)
Source: Miss. Code Ann . §69-15-3.