RESOLUTION #2 — 2012
Regular Winter Session
PENDING WAIVER OF PRIOR NOTICE PROVISION
Submitted by
AVMA Executive Board

POLICY ON ANNUAL RABIES VACCINATION WAIVER

RESOLVED, that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) approve the Policy on Annual Rabies Vaccination Waiver as noted below and related form in the attachment:

Annual Rabies Vaccination Waiver
The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) strongly supports the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians’ (NASPHV) recommendation that all dogs, cats, and ferrets should be vaccinated to protect against rabies infection. Rabies is an almost invariably fatal disease for animals and humans; vaccination of animals is a critical step in preventing infection and protecting public health. However, AVMA recognizes that some individual animals may have experienced a severe life-threatening adverse event to a previous rabies vaccination that may contraindicate vaccination, or a waiver might be necessary for research purposes. If adequate steps can be taken to minimize the chance of exposure to rabies virus, the AVMA recommends that such animals be granted a waiver from mandatory rabies vaccination, upon recommendation of a licensed veterinarian and with the concurrence of the appropriate public health authorities. The attached “Model Annual Rabies Vaccination Waiver Form” may be used as a template for this purpose.

Because rabies continues to be a significant public health issue, waivers should not be issued arbitrarily upon client request and should be based upon clinical evidence that the animal would be at considerable risk of being harmed by the vaccine because of a diagnosed medical condition. Modern killed virus or recombinant rabies vaccines have no risk of inducing rabies in the vaccinated animal and are not contraindicated in most immunocompromised animals. Advanced age of the animal or a desire on the part of the client or veterinarian to minimize the use of vaccinations (in the absence of a specific contraindication to vaccination) should not be considered sufficient justification for issuing a rabies vaccination waiver.

To ensure that the risk to both the individual animal and to public health is considered, a waiver of rabies vaccination should only be issued when a licensed veterinarian with a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship with the animal and the appropriate public health authorities concur that the waiver should be issued. The client must be informed that, even if a waiver is issued, the waiver only serves to allow the animal to be properly licensed in compliance with animal control regulations. In the event that the animal is involved in a potential rabies exposure incident, the animal should be considered unvaccinated against rabies for the purpose of appropriate public health regulations or when following the recommendations of the NASPHV Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control. All rabies vaccination waivers should be reconsidered at least yearly and, if appropriate, may be renewed on an annual basis following a reassessment of the animal’s condition.

Although the AVMA supports the existence of a process for issuing waivers of rabies vaccination requirements in every jurisdiction, this policy should not be construed as justification for failing to vaccinate animals for rabies in jurisdictions where such vaccination is required by law and no waiver or delay process exists.

Statement about the Resolution

Following a request from the Council on Biologic and Therapeutic Agents (COBTA) Executive Board liaison over a year ago that the AVMA consider a policy on rabies vaccination exemptions due to pre-existing medical conditions and an accompanying model certificate, the Council on Public Health and Regulatory Veterinary Medicine (CPHRVM) has worked diligently with multiple entities to develop a policy to address exemptions from mandatory rabies vaccination requirements.
While the CPHRVM still endorses and strongly supports the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians’ (NASPHV) recommendation that all dogs, cats, and ferrets should be vaccinated to protect against rabies infection, the Council recognizes that there are unique circumstances in which an annual rabies vaccination waiver may be justified and warranted.

The CPHRVM has thoughtfully considered and incorporated constructive comments from COBTA, the Clinical Practitioners Advisory Committee to COBTA, the Council on Veterinary Services (CoVS), the AVMA PLIT, and the NASPHV prior to development and submission of its recommendation for the new Policy on Annual Rabies Vaccination Waiver and accompanying model waiver form.

**Financial Impact:** XXX

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