

Wyoming Revising Controversial Rabies Law

The regulation required that any unvaccinated dog that bit a human be immediately euthanized and tested for rabies.

Wyoming state officials are revising a controversial rabies law, giving local veterinarians and health officials more power to decide whether to euthanize animals and deferring to local ordinances where they exist.

The original version of the law, signed in March by Gov. Dave Freudenthal, required that any unvaccinated dog, cat or ferret that bit a human be immediately euthanized, then tested for rabies. Wyoming doesn't have a law requiring vaccinations.

However the revised rule, announced Wednesday, May 3 under the states emergency rule process, allows the state veterinarian or a local designee to quarantine an animal for up to 10 days for observation before euthanizing it.

When the rule was adopted, state officials said it would encourage more people to vaccinate their pets and could spare bite victims the pain and expense of rabies shots.

But some veterinarians objected to the rule, saying it was unnecessary in a state that hadn't seen a human case of rabies in years; and some local officials had questioned how the rule would affect enforcement of local laws where there was a conflict.

A public comment period for the emergency revisions is still being planned, according to the Wyoming Health Department, which was consulted in drafting the rules.

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