

## Hearing Set for Proposal on Rabies Regulations

**Proposal would require stores, shelters, and other entities to log the names of anyone with unvaccinated dogs or cats.**

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Connecticut's Department of Agriculture will hold a public hearing Aug. 22, 2007, on a proposed set of regulations that would require pet stores, animal shelters, petting zoos, riding stables, and other entities to keep a log of the names and contact information of anyone who visits their location and handles an animal not yet vaccinated for rabies, including kittens and puppies too young for the vaccination.

Under the proposal, all animals held in a public setting "for which there is a licensed rabies vaccine" would be required to receive the vaccine unless they are under the minimum age – 3 months old for dogs and cats – or held in a city pound.

Approved rabies vaccinations exist for cats, dogs, ferrets, horses, cattle, and sheep, in addition to oral vaccines for immunization of wildlife, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association

A public setting is defined as "any event, facility or premise at which the public is invited or allowed to have direct physical contact with animals."

The regulation is nothing new, says Dr. Bruce Sherman, a former veterinarian and the Dept. of Agriculture's director for the Bureau of Regulation and Inspection. It's been on the books for a while, as recently as three years ago, as part of a state emergency order to prevent the transmission of rabies. That order, however, is no longer valid, and the state determined it needed a new regulation to enforce its rabies-prevention mandate, Sherman says.

The emergency order was prompted by a 1993 incident in which about 70 people were exposed to a pony with rabies in Windsor, Conn.

A background paper on the new rabies proposal cites three incidents in nearby states as evidence of preventable, expensive tragedies, including a rabid goat at a county fair in New York, which 25,000 people visited.

The proposal further stipulates that if the names of people coming in contact with the unvaccinated animals cannot be recorded, the animal must be separated from the public by a barrier, such as Plexiglas or a double-fence. In addition, the proprietor would be required to post a rabies advisory notice stating not to feed or touch the animals.

"We're talking about other species, not just dogs and cats," Sherman says, "cattle and sheep, too."

Cats are more likely to become infected with rabies than dogs, while horses and ferrets are less likely than both cats and dogs to incur an infection, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Connecticut's most recent rabies data found that wildlife had much higher rates of rabies than domestic animals. Raccoons alone accounted for three-quarters of the almost 6,000 rabies cases the state had documented from April 1991, to Aug. 7, 2007. There were also nine cases of dogs with rabies, eight horses, and 108 of cats.

The public hearing is scheduled at 10 a.m. on August 22, 2007, in room 126 of the State Office Building in Hartford on Capitol Avenue.

A full text of the proposal is available at [www.ct.gov/doag](http://www.ct.gov/doag).