



Health Alert
Domestic Cat Positive for Rabies in Glen Ellen

TO: VETERINARIANS
FROM: LYNN SILVER CHALFIN, MD, MPH, HEALTH OFFICER
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QUESTIONS: DISEASE CONTROL UNIT – PUBLIC HEALTH (565-4566)
DATE: JANUARY 25, 2013
CC: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL VETERINARY STAFF

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF ALL CLINICIANS

1. **Ensure up to date rabies vaccination for all canines**, in compliance with California State Regulations
2. **Strongly encourage rabies vaccination of all felines**, for reasons as exemplified by this event
3. **Assure that you and your staff are vaccinated against rabies.**
4. **Suspicious animals**, with signs* or positive history of exposure to a rabid animal, should be immediately euthanized. Call Animal Care and Control to coordinate transport and testing.
5. **Cases of humans with history of exposure to rabid animal or determined to be at high risk of infection should be reported to Public Health Disease Control: Mon-Fri: 565-4566. Weekends or evenings: Call REDCOM 568-5992**

Sonoma County Department of Health Services has determined that a domestic cat in the Glen Ellen area had rabies. This cat is the first domestic animal in the County to test positive since 1997, when a dog entered California with the disease. This case highlights the dangers of failing to vaccinate pets.

The cat, which was unvaccinated, was taken to their family veterinarian for strange and aggressive behavior. Public Health was notified and worked with the veterinarian and our Animal Care and Control unit which obtained a brain specimen which tested positive for rabies. The owners have received post-exposure preventative care. Animal Care and Control visited the neighborhood where the cat lived and notified neighbors of a possible risk of exposure to rabies if they had contact with the cat. Both people and pets were evaluated for risk of exposure and referred appropriately for care.

This incident serves as an important reminder that rabies is still present in our animal populations, sporadic cases in domestic animals can still occur. While rabies is not increasing in Sonoma County, and no human cases have occurred in recent years in the County, one fatal human case occurred in 2012 from a bat exposure in Contra Costa County.

*Behavioral signs of rabid animals, wild or domestic, may include staggering, restlessness, aggression, change the tone of their barks or growls, or appear to be choking. Passive animals sometimes become fierce and aggressive.

For more information about rabies please go to the Sonoma County Animal Control website:

<http://www.sonoma-county.org/Shelter/rabies.htm> or the California Department of Public Health rabies web page:
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/rabies.aspx>

Individuals can also contact the Sonoma County Department of Health Services Public Health Division at 565-4567.

Categories of urgency levels

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action