



County of San Diego
Department of Animal Services

Canine Rabies Vaccination Exemption FAQs

1. Why do I need to fill out two forms?

Cooperative efforts have resulted in rabies being eradicated from the San Diego County pet populations. However, to ensure that the rabies vaccination exemption program does not result in a resurgence of rabies infections in San Diego County, the additional information is deemed necessary for the evaluation of a request.

Two forms are **required** to apply for exemption from canine rabies vaccination:

- [State of California's "Rabies Vaccination Certificate-Exemption from Canine Rabies Vaccination"](#)
- [County of San Diego, Department of Animal Services "Supplemental" Form](#)

We accept these forms only when signed by both veterinarian and dog owner. The completed Supplemental Form both establishes an official request specifically to San Diego County and allows for internal tracking. The medical reason serves as supportive information for the condition for which exemption is sought. This information will be reviewed by County veterinarians to assess the medical justification for exemption. Every year large numbers of dogs are imported into San Diego County from other countries, further increasing the risk of rabies exposure to both human and pet populations. Our goal is to make every effort to protect public health.

2. Which medical conditions are accepted for approval of exemption?

A list of diseases/conditions has not been defined for this process. However, veterinarians advocating for clients and veterinarians protecting the public should use professional judgment when assessing the risk of rabies vaccination to that of a dog's health status. Examples of serious medical conditions that may warrant exemption include, but are not limited to, immune-mediated diseases (e.g., IMHA), cancer therapy, and severe adverse reactions to rabies vaccination. Old age, weakness, pregnancy, minor reactions to rabies vaccination (e.g., facial angioedema), reactions to non-rabies vaccinations and positive rabies titers are not conditions that warrant an exemption.

The law states that an exemption may be granted for the rabies vaccine if "a rabies vaccination would endanger the dog's life." It also requires that the condition warranting the exemption be documented. The entire law is available to view at <http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes.xhtml>. Click on the Health and Safety Code; then enter for Code: HSC and Section: 121690.

3. Who will be notified of approval/denial?

Notification will be distributed by the Department of Animal Services to the State Public Health Department, County Public Health Department, and requesting veterinarian. Veterinarian may provide copy to dog owner. This distribution will allow the veterinarian to maintain a copy in the dog's medical record, as well as facilitate a veterinarian-client discussion about issues concerning dogs not vaccinated for rabies.

4. For how long are approved exemptions valid?

Exemptions are valid for a maximum of one (1) year. If the animal's condition persistently precludes rabies immunization, a new request must be submitted annually. **Note: Dog license renewals accompanied by a rabies exemption request are also valid for one year only.**

5. What happens if the exempted dog is exposed to a rabid (or untested, potentially rabid) wild animal such as a bat, skunk, fox, raccoon, coyote, or opossum?

A rabies vaccination exemption may be used only for the purposes of obtaining a license for the indicated dog. The unvaccinated dog will be subjected to the same dispositions as other unvaccinated dogs as outlined in the California Code of Regulations. For example, *vaccinated* dogs exposed to rabid or potentially rabid animals (i.e., most wildlife, rabies reservoirs) are quarantined for 30 days, while *unvaccinated* dogs would be subject to six (6) months quarantine and/or euthanasia.

6. What restrictions are imposed on the client/dog for not being rabies-vaccinated?

The dog must be confined to the premises indicated on the form, or else on a six-foot (6') leash and under the direct physical control of an adult. Additionally, the dog cannot have contact with any animal that is not current with rabies vaccination.



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