

## ***Animal Management:***

### **Management of a Dog, Cat or Ferret that Bites a Human (NCGS130A-196)**

According to NCGS 130A-196 “... **All dogs and cats that bite a person shall be immediately confined for 10 days in a place designated by the local health director. ...**” When a person is bitten by a dog, cat or ferret or another animal that is a potential carrier of rabies, the following events should occur:

1. **REPORT the bite** to the local health director (<http://www.ncalhd.org/directors> )

Persons required to report are:

- **the person bitten, or the parent/guardian** of a bitten minor (report immediately);
- **the owner or person in possession** of the animal (report immediately); and
- **the physician or health care provider** who attends the bitten person is required to report the bite and the person’s name, age and sex to the local health director **within 24 hours** of the incident.

2. **Contact local animal control to CAPTURE the animal** for 10-day confinement or testing:

- **Normal and healthy domestic dogs, cats and ferrets**, regardless of vaccination status, should immediately be placed in a **10-day confinement** [https://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/lhds/manuals/rabies/docs/10day\\_domestic.pdf](https://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/lhds/manuals/rabies/docs/10day_domestic.pdf). The local health director determines the location and conditions of the confinement.
- **Stray or feral dogs, cats and ferrets** should be captured immediately by Animal Control and held for 72 hours (96 hours if event occurs on weekend or holiday). If the owner cannot be determined within this period, the local health director may authorize euthanasia and rabies testing at the State Laboratory of Public Health (SLPH).
- **Law enforcement dogs** may be released from confinement by the local health director to perform official duties, if the dog has proof of a current rabies certificate.
- **Owned dogs:** The local health director may allow the animal to be confined on the owner’s property only after careful review of the circumstances of the case.
- **Hybrids** are regarded as wild animals in North Carolina and should be managed as wild animals in the event that a person is bitten. A 10-day confinement period cannot be implemented for a wolf hybrid, cat hybrid, or a wild animal that bites a person because the shedding period for rabies virus is not known for hybrids or wild animals. Therefore, if a hybrid or wild animal bites a person, the animal should be humanely euthanized and the head submitted for rabies diagnostic testing at the State Laboratory of Public Health.
- **Owners who do not comply with 130A-196** are guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor, and the local health director may order seizure of the animal and confinement at the owner’s expense.

3. **ASSESS status of the animal during the 10-day confinement to determine if the person bitten needs post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).**

In all cases, ***if an animal is tested and found positive for rabies, rabies PEP should begin without delay.*** Otherwise, base the decision on the results of the 10-day confinement:

- The person bitten *should not begin PEP if the dog, cat or ferret remains normal and healthy* throughout the entire 10-day confinement period. Experimental and historic evidence document that dogs, cats, and ferrets shed virus for a few days prior to clinical onset of disease and during illness. According to the [2008 ACIP Guidelines](#), “Those that remain alive and healthy 10 days after a bite would not have been shedding rabies virus in their saliva and would not have been infectious at the time of the bite.”
- Any animal that dies for any reason during the 10-day confinement and observation period — whether from illness, accidental, intentional, or mysterious circumstance — **must** be tested for rabies. The head must be sent without delay to the State Laboratory Public Health for testing. There are no exceptions. (See N.C. General Statute § 130A-199 below.) **Begin PEP immediately if the lab test is positive for rabies.** If it is negative, PEP is not indicated.
- Any animal that develops unusual behavior or clinical signs consistent with rabies as diagnosed by a licensed veterinarian during the 10-day confinement period **must** be humanely euthanized and immediately submitted to the State Laboratory Public Health for rabies testing. Clinical signs of rabies vary but may include abnormal behavior, lack of appetite, difficulty swallowing, cranial nerve deficits, ataxia, paralysis, altered vocalization and seizures. Progression to death is rapid. There are currently no known effective rabies antiviral drugs. **Begin PEP immediately if the lab test is positive for rabies.** If it is negative, PEP is not indicated.

*The legal authority for euthanasia and for SLPH testing follows:*

**§ 130A-199. Rabid animals to be destroyed; heads to be sent to State Laboratory of Public Health.** An animal diagnosed as having rabies by a licensed veterinarian shall be destroyed and its head sent to the State Laboratory of Public Health. The heads of all animals that die during a confinement period required by this Part shall be immediately sent to the State Laboratory of Public Health for rabies diagnosis. (1935, c. 122, s. 16; 1953, c. 876, s. 12; 1973, c. 476, s. 128; 1983, c. 891, s. 2; 2009-327, s. 14.)

- Administration of rabies vaccine to the dog, cat or ferret is not recommended during the confinement period to avoid confusing signs of rabies with possible side effects of vaccine administration.
- Euthanasia of dogs, cats and ferrets that bite a person is not permissible unless signs or symptoms compatible with rabies develop during the 10-day confinement period or there are extenuating circumstances confirmed by Veterinary Public Health that support euthanasia or early submission for laboratory testing. Some examples follow.
  - a. A severely injured animal that bites a person (*e.g.*, after being hit by car). A veterinarian determines that euthanasia is necessary to relieve the animal's suffering.
  - b. A licensed veterinarian determines that it would be cruel and unusual to keep the animal alive throughout the 10-day confinement (*e.g.*, a cat is brought into a vet

clinic to be euthanized for a terminal cancer and bites someone before it is put to sleep).

- c. An animal is considered a public safety threat to the staff assigned to care for it during the 10-day quarantine period (e.g., a dog viciously attacked someone and continues to be dangerous to staff).

**See also:**

- In this section of this Manual: [10-Day Confinement of Domestic Dogs, Cats and Ferrets that Bite People: Q&A and Recommendations](#)