

CANINE RABIES VACCINATION EXEMPTIONS

KEY MESSAGES

- Canine rabies vaccination exemption applications and all related communications will only be accepted from veterinarians, not dog owners.
- Exemptions are only valid for one year.
- Applications will be automatically denied if missing any of the following: the local and state forms and relevant medical records (5 page maximum).

In LA County (except in Pasadena, Long Beach and Vernon), the authority to grant rabies vaccination exemptions for dogs is delegated to VPH. California law states that a rabies vaccination exemption may be granted if “a rabies vaccination would endanger the dog’s life.” It also requires that the condition warranting the exemption be documented. This state law applies for dogs only. Local jurisdictions may enact similar requirements for licensing of cats. Contact your local animal control for cat-related rabies vaccine or licensing concerns. The entire law is available at:

<https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes.xhtml> (Health and Safety Code 121690).

Canine rabies vaccination exemption requests must be submitted to VPH by the veterinarian, not the dog owner. A complete exemption request includes BOTH forms, dog owner’s signature, veterinarian’s signature AND up to 5 pages of medical records documenting the dog’s medical condition related to the request. Incomplete exemption requests will be denied.

Only health conditions that fit the evidence-based criteria for exemption may be approved. Dogs approved for a rabies vaccine exemption are considered unvaccinated and must abide by [rabies laws for unvaccinated pets](#). Exemptions are only valid for 1-year and an application must be submitted each year for renewal. Permanent exemptions do not exist. California does not accept positive rabies titers in lieu of a rabies vaccine.

STEPS TO SUBMIT A CANINE RABIES VACCINATION EXEMPTION REQUEST

1. For dogs living in LA County (except Pasadena, Long Beach, or Vernon), canine rabies vaccination exemption requests are submitted by a veterinarian (not the dog owner) to VPH.
 - a. For dogs living in Pasadena, contact the Pasadena Humane Society at 626-792-7151.
 - b. For dogs living in Long Beach, contact Long Beach Animal Care Services, at 562-570-7387, or visit: longbeach.gov/acs/pet-laws-and-licensing/canine-rabies-exemption/
 - c. For dogs living in Vernon, contact the Southeast Area Animal control authority (SEAACA) at 562-803-3301.
 - d. Cat owners should contact their city to inquire about procedures for getting an exemption.



2. Prior to completing the forms, review the sections below of cases that may be approved and cases that will not be approved.
3. Complete BOTH Canine Rabies Vaccination Exemption Request forms AND submit with **up to 5 pages of medical records documenting the dog's medical condition related to the request**. Incomplete submissions will be automatically denied. A letter from a veterinarian is not considered a replacement for appropriate medical records.
 - a. Completed requests can be emailed to vet@ph.lacounty.gov (preferred) or faxed to (213) 481-2375.
 - b. Blank exemption forms are only available by request by calling our office at 213-288-7060 or by email: vet@ph.lacounty.gov.
4. VPH strives to process the request within 5 business days. A written decision if the request was approved or denied will be provided to the submitting veterinarian by email or fax. Outside of that timeframe, if you do not hear back from VPH about a submitted request, please call our office at 213-288-7060 or email at vet@ph.lacounty.gov.

WHAT TO DO AFTER AN EXEMPTION REQUEST IS APPROVED OR DENIED

It is the applying veterinarian's responsibility to relay the approved or denied notice to the pet owner once the notice is received.

1. Provide copies of the final document (Approved or Denied) to your client.
2. Inform your clients that, if their exemption request is approved, their dog:
 - a. Will be considered at higher risk for contracting rabies and will be considered legally unvaccinated. This means the animal will be subject to a California state-mandated 180-day quarantine if exposed to a wild animal.
 - b. Must be confined at home, or on a 6-foot-long leash controlled by an adult.
 - c. Cannot live or have contact with other animals not vaccinated for rabies. Only one dog in a household can have a rabies vaccination exemption.
3. The exemption is valid for one year only, after which the dog must either be vaccinated for rabies, or another full request must be submitted and approved.
4. If the exemption is denied due to missing information, new rabies vaccination exemption forms must be completed and submitted for reconsideration.



CASES WHERE RABIES VACCINATION EXEMPTION MAY BE APPROVED

- Life-threatening anaphylactic reaction soon after administration of a rabies vaccine
 - Signs consistent with anaphylactic shock
 - Mild facial angioedema, hives, or localized reactions do **not** qualify as life-threatening
- Immune-Mediated Hemolytic Anemia (IMHA), **if**:
 - Dog is still within first year after diagnosis, or
 - Onset was within 1 month of a rabies vaccination, or
 - More than one episode (i.e. documented relapses)
- Polyradiculoneuropathy if:
 - Dog is still within the first year after diagnosis, or
 - Onset was within 1 month after rabies vaccination
- Dog currently on immunosuppressive therapy for cancer or immune-mediated disease
 - Low dose prednisone is not considered immunosuppressive therapy
- Terminal prognosis
 - Dog has fewer than 3 months to live in the opinion of presiding veterinarian
 - Must be specifically documented in the medical record

CASES WHERE RABIES VACCINATION EXEMPTION WILL NOT BE APPROVED

- Old age
- Positive rabies antibody titers (California does not recognize rabies titers in lieu of a rabies vaccine)
- Minor or moderate reactions (including injection site reactions) to rabies vaccination
- Reaction to vaccinations other than rabies
- History of neoplasia and dog is not currently on immunosuppressive therapy
- Medical condition not documented, or no documentation submitted
- Short-term exemptions (e.g. 1 month exemption for recovery from acute illness). In such cases, work with the Animal Control or other licensing agency to request a temporary delay.
- Illegible or incomplete requests



VETERINARIANS:

Rabies exemption request forms are not available online.

Please contact VPH for copies of the Canine Rabies Vaccination Exemption forms.

Phone: 213-288-7060

Email: vet@ph.lacounty.gov

Completed forms will only be accepted from veterinarians.

