

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2025

Legislative Document

No. 528

H.P. 347

House of Representatives, February 11, 2025

An Act to Address the Rise in Rabies in Animals by Appointing Certified Rabies Vaccine Administrators

Reference to the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative DOUDERA of Camden.
Cosponsored by Senator TALBOT ROSS of Cumberland and
Representatives: DILL of Old Town, FROST of Belgrade, MEYER of Eliot, OSHER of
Orono, PLUECKER of Warren, Senator: TEPLER of Sagadahoc.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 7 MRSA §1808-A, 2nd ¶**, as enacted by PL 2001, c. 308, §1, is amended
3 to read:

4 An animal vaccinated against rabies by a person who is not a licensed veterinarian, a
5 certified rabies vaccinator appointed and certified pursuant to section 3920 or under the
6 direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian may not be certified as vaccinated against
7 rabies and must be treated as an unvaccinated animal under Title 22, chapter 251,
8 subchapter 5 and rules adopted pursuant to that chapter.

9 **Sec. 2. 7 MRSA §3906-B, sub-§18** is enacted to read:

10 **18. Training of person appointed by commissioner to vaccinate animals.** The
11 commissioner, in consultation with veterinarians employed by the State, shall develop a
12 program to train a person appointed by the commissioner as provided under section 3920
13 to vaccinate animals. The program must include, but is not limited to, training relating to
14 properly storing and administering rabies vaccines; issuing rabies certificates; and
15 providing information to an owner or keeper of an animal to be vaccinated.

16 The commissioner shall certify a person who satisfactorily completes the training program.

17 **Sec. 3. 7 MRSA §3907, sub-§9-C** is enacted to read:

18 **9-C. Certified rabies vaccinator.** "Certified rabies vaccinator" means a person
19 appointed and certified to administer rabies vaccine to animals pursuant to section 3920.

20 **Sec. 4. 7 MRSA §3916**, as amended by PL 2021, c. 99, §§6 and 7, is further amended
21 to read:

22 **§3916. Rabies vaccinations**

23 **1. Required for cats.** Except as provided in subsection 4, an owner or keeper of a cat
24 over 3 months of age ~~must~~ shall have that cat vaccinated against rabies. ~~Rabies~~ The rabies
25 vaccine must be administered by a licensed veterinarian or under the supervision of a
26 licensed veterinarian or by a certified rabies vaccinator. Upon receiving an initial
27 vaccination, a cat is considered protected for one year and an owner or keeper of that cat
28 ~~must~~ shall get a booster vaccination for that cat one year after the initial vaccination and
29 subsequent booster vaccinations at intervals that do not exceed the intervals recommended
30 by a national association of state public health veterinarians for the type of vaccine
31 administered.

32 **1-A. Required for dogs.** Except as provided in subsection 4, an owner or keeper of
33 a dog, within 30 days after the dog attains ~~the age of~~ 3 months of age, shall have that dog
34 vaccinated against rabies. The rabies vaccine must be administered by a licensed
35 veterinarian or under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian or by a certified rabies
36 vaccinator. Upon receiving an initial vaccination, a dog is considered protected for one
37 year and an owner or keeper of that dog shall get a booster vaccination for that dog one
38 year after the initial vaccination and subsequent booster vaccinations at intervals that do
39 not exceed the intervals recommended by a national association of state public health
40 veterinarians for the type of vaccine administered. A wolf hybrid is required to be
41 vaccinated in accordance with this subsection. The procedure prescribed under Title 22,

1 chapter 251, subchapter 5 for a wolf hybrid suspected of having rabies does not change
2 based on proof that the wolf hybrid has received a rabies vaccination.

3 **2. Certificate.** A licensed veterinarian who vaccinates or supervises the vaccination
4 of a cat or dog or a certified rabies vaccinator who vaccinates a cat or dog shall issue to the
5 owner or keeper a certificate of rabies vaccination approved by the State and shall indicate
6 on the certificate the date by which a booster vaccination is required pursuant to subsection
7 1 or 1-A, whichever is applicable.

8 **2-A. Notice to department.** A veterinarian or certified rabies vaccinator who issues
9 a certificate of rabies vaccination for a dog pursuant to subsection 2 shall, within 30 days
10 of issuing the certificate, forward by mail, e-mail or fax a copy of that certificate to the
11 department. The department shall send a copy of the certificate by mail, e-mail or fax to
12 the clerk of the municipality in which the owner or keeper resides. If the owner or keeper
13 resides in the unorganized territory, the department shall send a copy of the certificate to
14 the dog recorder in that unorganized territory or, in the absence of a duly authorized dog
15 recorder, to the dog recorder in the nearest municipality or unorganized territory in the
16 same county in which the owner or keeper resides. The department may retain a copy or
17 electronic record of the rabies certificate. The department may accumulate certificates
18 received and distribute them periodically to the appropriate municipalities and dog
19 recorders. Distributions must be made no fewer than 4 times a year.

20 **3. Enforcement.** A humane agent, an animal control officer or a law enforcement
21 officer may ask an owner or keeper of a cat or dog to present proof of a certificate of rabies
22 vaccination from the State.

23 **4. Exception.** Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter to the contrary, an animal
24 shelter operated by a nonprofit organization is not required to vaccinate an abandoned or
25 stray cat or dog received by the shelter.

26 An owner or keeper of a cat or dog is exempt from the requirements of subsection 1 or 1-A,
27 whichever is applicable, if a medical reason exists that precludes the vaccination of the cat
28 or dog. To qualify for this exemption, the owner or keeper must have a written statement
29 signed by a licensed veterinarian that includes a description of the cat or dog and the
30 medical reason that precludes the vaccination.

31 **Sec. 5. 7 MRSA §3917, sub-§1**, as amended by PL 1993, c. 468, §10, is further
32 amended to read:

33 **1. Clinic establishment.** The department shall facilitate the establishment of low-cost
34 antirabies clinics at locations and on dates as appropriate. At least one low-cost antirabies
35 clinic must be conducted annually in each county. In facilitating the establishment of
36 antirabies clinics, the department shall cooperate with local veterinarians and local
37 organizations. When other arrangements ~~can not~~ cannot be made for a licensed veterinarian
38 to vaccinate or to supervise vaccinations by an animal technician at a low-cost clinic, a
39 veterinarian employed by the department or a certified rabies vaccinator shall administer
40 the vaccinations.

41 **Sec. 6. 7 MRSA §3920** is enacted to read:

42 **§3920. Certified rabies vaccinator**

1 **1. Appointment and certification.** Except as provided in subsection 5, the
2 commissioner, in consultation with the Animal Welfare Advisory Council, as established
3 by Title 5, section 12004-I, subsection 2-C and as described in section 3906-C, shall
4 appoint one or more persons in each county to administer rabies vaccines to animals. Upon
5 initial appointment, a person must complete training in accordance with section 3906-B,
6 subsection 18 in order to become a certified rabies vaccinator. A certified rabies vaccinator
7 serves in a volunteer capacity unless the person is an employee of the State or an animal
8 shelter licensed under section 3932-A. A humane agent may serve as a certified rabies
9 vaccinator. A certified rabies vaccinator is authorized to act until termination of
10 appointment by the commissioner or until resignation of the certified rabies vaccinator.

11 **2. Scope and duration.** A certified rabies vaccinator shall acknowledge in writing
12 that the certified rabies vaccinator understands the scope and duration of service.

13 **3. Immunity from civil liability.** A certified rabies vaccinator is not civilly liable to
14 any party for actions made in accordance with this chapter.

15 **4. Rulemaking.** The commissioner shall adopt rules to establish procedures for
16 appointment and certification of certified rabies vaccinators. Rules adopted pursuant to
17 this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

18 **5. Animal shelter requests.** An animal shelter licensed under section 3932-A may
19 submit a request to the commissioner that a member of the animal shelter's staff be
20 appointed as a certified rabies vaccinator in a limited capacity. The request must be
21 submitted in writing by the animal shelter's veterinarian of reference. A certified rabies
22 vaccinator authorized under this subsection may administer vaccines only to animals in the
23 care of the animal shelter or at an antirabies clinic established pursuant to section 3917.

24 **Sec. 7. 7 MRSA §3922, sub-§3,** as amended by PL 2007, c. 439, §12, is further
25 amended to read:

26 **3. Proof of immunization.** A municipal clerk may not issue a license for a dog until
27 the applicant has filed with the clerk proof that the dog has been immunized against rabies
28 as provided in section 3916, subsection 1-A and in accordance with rules adopted by the
29 Commissioner of Health and Human Services, except that the requirement of immunization
30 may be waived by the clerk under conditions set forth by the Commissioner of Health and
31 Human Services.

32 The commissioner shall adopt rules that allow the clerk and the commissioner to accept
33 valid proof of immunization against rabies provided by another state.

34 **Sec. 8. 7 MRSA §3923-B, sub-§2-A,** as enacted by PL 1999, c. 254, §5, is amended
35 to read:

36 **2-A. Rabies tags.** An owner or keeper shall ensure that a rabies tag obtained from a
37 veterinarian or a certified rabies vaccinator for immunization against rabies is securely
38 attached to a collar of leather, metal or material of comparable strength and that the collar
39 is worn at all times by the dog for which the rabies tag was issued, except as provided in
40 subsection 3.

SUMMARY

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This bill directs the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to appoint one or more persons in each county to administer rabies vaccines to animals and to develop a training program for this purpose.