

# **Town of Westford Animal Bite Reporting Procedures**

## **Domestic Animal Bite Reporting**

Massachusetts State Rabies Law requires all animal bites to be reported to local Animal Control Departments. If you are bitten by a dog or a cat make sure to get the owner's information, animal information and the rabies vaccination status of the animal. Regardless of vaccination status, the biting animal will be issued a state mandated 10-day quarantine. The location of the quarantine is at the discretion of the Westford Animal Control Officer. Most quarantines take place in the animal's own home. The Westford Animal Control Officer will follow up with a health check at the end of 10 days. If the animal is healthy, the animal could not have transmitted the rabies virus to the victim and post exposure rabies treatment is not necessary. If the biting animal is not identified and issued the 10-day quarantine, the victim must move forward with post exposure rabies treatment. **These quarantines are NOT issued for punishment of any animal, they are issued for Public Health purposes only.**

## **Procedures Following Animal Bite Incident:**

1. Document the following items (if known/possible)
  - a. Animals breed and general description
  - b. Owner's name, address, and phone number
  - c. Rabies vaccination status (if owner is known)
  - d. Do NOT try to catch the animal
2. Visit healthcare provider to report animal bite (Highly recommended, but not required)
  - a. Healthcare provider is legally required to report all animal bites to the local Animal Control Officer
3. Contact Westford Police Dispatch at 978-692-2161 to report the bite incident. The Police Dispatch will contact the Westford Animal Control Department to notify them of the incident.
4. Animal Control Officer will order a 10-day quarantine of animal upon notification of bite
5. At the completion of the 10-day quarantine, the Animal Control Officer will follow up with the bite victim to inform them of any updates on the animal being held in quarantine. If the animal is determined to be safe to general public, the Animal Control Officer will lift the quarantine following the 10-day period
6. The Animal Control Officer can be reached at 978-692-4574 or by email at [animalcontrol@westfordma.gov](mailto:animalcontrol@westfordma.gov) for any questions for concerns
7. Any complaints or issues regarding these steps can be reported to the Assistant Town Manager at 978-692-5501.

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## **Instructions for 10-Day Home Quarantine**

Massachusetts State Law requires a 10-Day rabies quarantine for any dog, cat or other domesticated mammal which bites or scratches a human or other animal, regardless of vaccination status. This measure is designed to protect both humans and animals from the rabies virus, a preventable but fatal disease to both humans and animals. For more information, please

contact the Massachusetts Bureau of Animal Health at (617) 626-1786 or the Westford Animal Control Officer at (978) 692-4574.

**THE LOCATION OF THE QUARANTINE IS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE LOCAL ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER**

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**Instructions for Home Quarantine**

- 1) Your home may serve as the facility used for confinement and shall ensure an escape proof environment subject to unannounced, periodic spot checks by the Animal Control Officer. The animal shall be confined inside your home and CANNOT be left outside on a chain or left inside a fenced yard unattended.
- 2) The animal shall not leave the quarantine premise for any reason. The animal shall not have contact with humans or animals for the 10-day period except the designated primary caretaker.
- 3) At the first signs of illness, the owner shall notify the Animal Control Officer. Symptoms to watch for include fever, loss of appetite, excessive irritability, unusual vocalization, change in behavior, restlessness, trouble walking, tremors, excessive salivation, convulsions, paralysis, stupors, or unprovoked aggression. If the animal dies during the 10-day quarantine, contact the Animal Control Officer and the Westford Health Department immediately.
- 4) At the end of the 10-day quarantine period, the Animal Control Officer MUST visit the animal to verify health status and lift the quarantine order. If the animal is healthy after the 10 days, we know that the rabies virus was not passed to the person or animal who was bit or scratched.
- 5) If at any time during the quarantine these guidelines cannot be met or are violated, the animal will be picked up and the 10-day quarantine will be completed at a facility designated by the Animal Control Officer **AT THE OWNER'S EXPENSE**. Violations of a quarantine order are subject to a fine of up to \$500 or by imprisonment for not more than one year, or both.

**Please note while cases are not frequent, rabies is 100% fatal. Please adhere to the State quarantine guidelines. We care about you and your animal's health!**