

Rabies Mitigation Policy - VNDL

As the Purdue Veterinary Nursing Distance Learning (VNDL) program works with students globally, the risk of exposure may vary due to geographic location of each student's approved Clinical Mentorship Site, the type of animals to which the student is exposed, and the degree of contact with animals potentially carrying the rabies virus. Considering this possibility, we highly recommend that all students either be inoculated against rabies or those who have previously been inoculated to have protective rabies titers checked. For students who elect to receive the rabies vaccine series, we encourage you to review the document titled "Rabies Availability and Assistance" on the VNDL website which provides information as to vaccine availability and cost assistance.

***If a student is fully vaccinated (as described below) and provides appropriate documented proof, they are permitted to handle unvaccinated animals. ***

The VNDL program seeks to provide education and awareness of the risk of rabies exposure for all veterinary professionals working in the field, taking into account that some working in the industry may not be impacted by the risk of rabies due to geographic location and others may experience limited availability of vaccine or the resources to acquire the vaccine prior to enrollment.

It is the policy of Purdue University's VNDL program to not require pre-exposure human rabies vaccines for its students. The rabies mitigation policy lays out the steps that PU and VNDL have put in place to help decrease the risks of rabies.

Students will be educated on the risks involved with handling animals, zoonotic diseases and disease transmission, as well as measures that can decrease the risk of exposure and infection. VNDL students will also be educated regarding rabies exposure prevention, pre-exposure rabies vaccination, locating pre-exposure vaccinations in their area, and how they should respond in the event they are bitten or scratched while working on clinical tasks.

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the measures in place to provide education to both students and supervisors regarding the risk of rabies exposure that may exist in certain areas and with certain patient groups with the goals of improving safety and minimizing risk for students working in clinical mentorship sites and demonstrating compliance with CVTEA accreditation policies and procedures outlined in Appendix A, Comprehensive Rabies Mitigation Plan.

II. POLICY STATEMENT:

The VNDL program prohibits students that are not fully vaccinated from handling unvaccinated companion animals or unvaccinated farm animals. Exceptions can be made if the patient is not of the appropriate age for vaccination as defined by the state. If a student is fully vaccinated and provides appropriate documented proof, they are permitted to handle unvaccinated animals.

III. DEFINITIONS

Unvaccinated animal - is defined as an animal that has either never been vaccinated against rabies, an animal that has been vaccinated but has not reached full seroconversion, or whose vaccination has expired according to the current Compendium of Animal Rabies Vaccines published by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, Inc.

Fully vaccinated students/staff/faculty - People are considered fully vaccinated after they have completed their initial rabies vaccine series (2-dose series given at days 0 and 7) plus either (a) a 1-dose booster between 3 weeks and 3 years following the first vaccine in the 2-dose series or (b) a one-time titer check after 1 year and up to 3 years following the first 2-dose series.

IV. AUDIENCE

This policy is written for VNDL students, staff, faculty, and clinical mentorship supervisors.

V. COMPLIANCE

Compliance will be ensured by oversight from the Veterinary Nursing Distance Learning Program Director, Assistant Director, and Clinical Mentorship Coordinator.

VI. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Clinical Mentorship Coordinator: Responsible for (a) supervision and ongoing maintenance of clinical mentorships in the Veterinary Nursing Distance Learning (VNDL) program (b) interacting with VNDL students and their mentors to facilitate clinical mentorship experiences, and (c) maintaining AVMA accreditation standards.

Veterinary Nursing Distance Learning Program - Director: Professor that oversees all VNDL staff.

Veterinary Nursing Distance Learning Program - Assistant Director: This position is responsible for performing work of an administrative, managerial, and professional nature under general supervision from the Program Director to provide a wide range of support for the VNDL program and ensure that the goals and objectives of the program are accomplished.

VII. APPLICABLE STATUTES, REGULATIONS, AND RELATED POLICIES (IF ANY)

Information for guidelines regarding zoonotic disease and rabies protection:

Rabies, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html>
PrEP, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/prevention/pre-exposure_vaccinations.html

What is Rabies?, World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/rabies/about/en/>

VIII. PROCEDURE

Components of VNDL Rabies Mitigation Policy:

Health Risk Acknowledgement Form. This is completed at the beginning of the first semester of the VNDL program. This outlines the recommendation for pre-exposure rabies vaccines and the risk of rabies exposure. There will also be a section on this form verifying the student's rabies vaccine status.

Clinical Mentorship and Facility Requirement Agreement Form. This form includes a statement on page 2 stating that all students that are not fully vaccinated are prohibited from handling unvaccinated companion animals or unvaccinated farm animals. Exceptions can be made if the patient is not of the appropriate age for vaccination as defined by the state. The clinical contract is signed by the veterinarian, hospital owner, hospital manager, or authorized representative. There will also be a section on this form verifying the student's rabies vaccine status.

Clinical Mentorship Supervisor Agreement Form. As supervisors are approved, they will be provided with information that includes this Rabies Mitigation Policy. Students are also provided a copy of this same information.

Education. All students will be educated on rabies risk prior to working with live animals for completion of clinical skills. This education is primarily a part of VM 10500, CPB 24000, and VCS 14001. The program curriculum includes information on a variety of zoonotic diseases including rabies. During course work, students view CDC policies, OSHA guidelines, and rabies surveillance information. Lessons and assignments include the importance of the pre-exposure rabies vaccine, the importance of appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as the steps which should be taken after possible exposure to an infected animal. In addition, students must research their state and determine their rabies exposure risk using the most recent CDC and State data available.

Animal Use for Clinical Skills. Per the Rabies Mitigation Policy, students must not use unvaccinated animals for completion of clinical tasks unless the patient is not of the appropriate age for vaccination as defined by the state, or the student is fully vaccinated (as described above).

Vaccination of animals: All animals used during laboratories (clinical mentorships) will be required to have a current rabies vaccination. We define current as the following:

- a. The rabies vaccine must be administered by a licensed veterinarian (or veterinary team member if allowable by individual state practice acts in the US).
- b. An animal can be considered immunized within 28 days after initial vaccination, when a peak rabies virus antibody titer is reached. An animal is considered currently vaccinated and immunized if the initial vaccination was administered at least 28 days previously or booster vaccinations have been administered in accordance with recommendations. Because a rapid anamnestic response is expected, an animal is considered currently vaccinated immediately after a booster vaccination.
- c. Vaccination of dogs, ferrets, equine, and livestock can be started at no sooner than three months of age. Some cat vaccines can be given as early as two months of age. Regardless of the age of the animal at initial vaccination, a booster vaccination should be administered one year later.
- d. Booster rabies vaccines administered in the United States after 15 months of age are valid immediately.
- e. Timing of the first rabies vaccination as well as on-going requirements will vary depending on state and city guidelines. Some vaccines are approved for subsequent 1-year use and some for 3-year use. However, regardless of the age of the patient or labeled vaccine duration, the first 2 vaccinations must be 1 year apart.

To enforce these policies, the VNDL program will require:

Student submission (through the mentorship course learning platform) showing the documentation of the current rabies vaccination in the different species medical records. This medical record will show the type and expiration of the vaccine used and the date the animal was vaccinated.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information regarding this policy, please contact the program director, at vetnurse@purdue.edu.

Adopted Aug 2022.

The VNDL Program seeks to provide education and awareness of the risk of rabies exposure for all veterinary professionals working in the field, however, the VNDL program also seeks to be inclusive of those working in the industry that may not be impacted by the risk of rabies due to geographic location or availability of vaccine or the resources to acquire the vaccine prior to enrollment.

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