

TVMA POSITION STATEMENT REGARDING RABIES VACCINATION AT THREE YEAR INTERVALS

The Tennessee Veterinary Medical Association (TVMA) is dedicated to protecting the health and well being of animals within the state of Tennessee and is committed to advancing the science and art of veterinary medicine. With this in mind, TVMA adopts the following position regarding intervals between rabies vaccinations in dogs and cats.

The control of rabies in animals, specifically dogs and cats, through the widespread use of rabies vaccination has been of enormous benefit to human public health. Less than a generation ago, human exposure to rabies, most often through contact with an infected dog or cat, resulted in hundreds of Americans being forced to undergo painful, costly, and sometimes dangerous treatments for this disease. Through the dedicated efforts of public health officials, veterinarians, and responsible pet owners, the need for anti-rabies treatment has diminished to a rare occurrence.

More recently, advancements in the potency and efficacy of rabies vaccinations have resulted in the development of vaccinations approved and labeled for administration at 3 year intervals.

The "Tennessee Anti-Rabies Law," TCA Title 68, Chapter 8, references the Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control in determining the frequency of rabies vaccination. The Compendium recommends the use of a 3 year vaccine in rabies control programs and states that there is no documented benefit to utilizing a 3 year vaccine on a more frequent basis. The "Tennessee Anti-Rabies Law" states in 68-8-103 (i), "Nothing in this section shall be construed to require more frequent rabies vaccinations or a greater number of rabies vaccinations than are required by the rabies compendium."

However, since it does not specifically prohibit more frequent rabies vaccination, a number of local public health departments and governments have mandated annual rabies vaccination for dogs and cats in their areas. Possible rationales for this decision might include a perceived need for more frequent vaccination based on local factors, such as the incidence of rabies in a particular area, or a belief that compliance will be higher with an annual program rather than a 3 year program.

Taking these and other factors into consideration, it is the stated position of the TVMA that the Legislature of the state of Tennessee should enact legislation to eliminate from the "Tennessee Anti-Rabies Law" the ability for local authorities to require more frequent rabies vaccination than required by the current version of the Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention & Control.