



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

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MEMORANDUM

TO: OFA Policy Advisory Council

FROM: Danie Glanc, OFA Farm Policy Analyst
519-821-8883; ext. 208, danielle.glanc@ofa.on.ca

DATE: April, 2018

RE: Update on Changes to Regulation 567 of *The Health Protection and Promotion Act* (Rabies Immunization)

On October 25, 2017, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care proposed amendments to Regulation 567, Rabies Immunization, under *The Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA).

OFA strongly recommended that the proposed amendments to O. Reg. 567, Rabies Immunization, be set aside and that consultations with Ontario's livestock commodity organizations and Ontario's Chief Veterinarian occur before any such regulatory amendment is made. OFA agreed with the stated objective to "modernize requirements for rabies immunization of animals". However, inviting public health units who are currently not subject to the requirement to have certain livestock in specific health unit jurisdictions immunized against rabies to be added to Tables 1 and/or 2 of the regulation appears not to be consistent with a risk-based approach. OFA recommended a risk-based approach be taken to determine if the certain livestock in the specific health unit jurisdictions currently listed should remain listed.

Even though OFA voiced its objection to the proposed changes, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care pushed through a regulatory change in December 2017. The amendment replaces the previous system which required rabies immunization for select animals in specific health units, but not others.

As of July 1st, 2018, all livestock which may come into contact with the public must be vaccinated for rabies. This applies to livestock for which there is a rabies vaccine available (cattle, horses, and sheep). Animals accessible only to the person or persons who are responsible for the care and control of such animal will be exempt from rabies immunization. Implementation and enforcement plans for these regulatory changes are in progress, as well as education and awareness activities to ensure consistent rabies immunization requirements for animals across the province.

Please contact me if you have any comments or questions.

Attachments:

1. OFA submission regarding proposed amendments to Rabies Immunization Reg. 567
2. Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care- HPPA Amendment- Rabies Immunization Communication
3. Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care – Ontario's Rabies Immunization Requirements for Animals (Frequently Asked Questions)



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November 8, 2017

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
777 Bay Street, 19th Floor
Suite 1903
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Regulatory Registry Proposal 17-HLTC042 – Proposed Amendments to Regulations made under the Health Protection and Promotion Act

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is Canada's largest voluntary general farm organization, representing more than 37,000 farm family businesses across Ontario. These farm businesses form the backbone of a robust food system and rural communities with the potential to drive the Ontario economy forward.

OFA objects to the extremely short comment period for this proposed regulatory amendment. A 14-day comment period is not sufficient to allow for a proper investigation and assessment of the proposed amendments.

We strongly recommend that the proposed amendments to O. Reg. 567, Rabies Immunization, be set aside and that consultations with Ontario's livestock commodity organizations and Ontario's Chief Veterinarian occur before any such regulatory amendment is made.

OFA agrees with the stated objective to "modernize requirements for rabies immunization of animals". However, inviting public health units who are currently not subject to the requirement to have certain livestock in specific health unit jurisdictions immunized against rabies to be added to Tables 1 and/or 2 of the regulation appears not to be consistent with a risk-based approach. In fact, we recommend a risk-based approach be taken to determine if the certain livestock in the specific health unit jurisdictions currently listed should remain listed.

Sincerely,

Keith Currie
President

cc: Hon. Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Hon. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon. Kathryn McGarry, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
Beef Farmers of Ontario
Dairy Farmers of Ontario
Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency
OFA Board of Directors

**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

Population and Public Health Division
Disease Prevention Policy and
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**Ministère de la Santé
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Division de la santé de la population et de la santé publique
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393 avenue University, 21^e étage
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March 28, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

The purpose of this letter is to provide information on the recent regulatory amendments to O. Reg. 567 (Rabies Immunization) under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA). The amendments, coming into force in summer 2018, will ensure a consistent provincial approach to rabies immunization in animals.

These amendments replace the previous approach, which saw rabies immunization of animals, particularly livestock, required in some health units, but not others. This will ensure that all animals in Ontario are subject to the same requirements, regardless of location.

As of July 1, 2018:

- all dogs and cats and ferrets over 3 months of age in Ontario must be immunized against rabies;
- all horses, cattle and sheep intended to come into direct contact with members of the general public must be immunized against rabies; and
- horses, cattle and sheep which are only accessible to persons responsible for their care and control will remain exempt from the rabies immunization requirement.

Horses, cattle and sheep are found in a wide variety of contexts across the province, the majority of which do not fall within the scope of the rabies immunization requirement. Animals accessible only to persons responsible for their care and control (*e.g.* owners, trainers, veterinarians, veterinary staff, handlers, barn staff, shippers, grooms, hotwalkers, abattoir workers, sales barn staff, transporters *etc.*) are not subject to the rabies immunization requirement. However, horses, cattle and sheep in settings such as petting zoos, animal exhibits where the general public or other individuals who are not directly responsible for their care and control are encouraged and/or expected to have direct contact with these animals, do need to be immunized against rabies.

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Additional information about how the rabies immunization requirements apply to livestock in the province may be found in the attached list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

The text of the newly amended O. Reg. 567 is available on the e-Laws website at <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r17497?search=567>

The ministry is finalizing an implementation plan for these regulatory changes to ensure consistency in awareness across the agricultural sector, as well training on consistent enforcement approaches for Boards of Health. Education and awareness activities will include: training webinars, information sessions, and written resources to ensure and support a consistent application of rabies immunization requirements for animals across the province.

For further information about rabies immunization requirements for animals under the HPPA, please contact Melissa Helferty, Manager, Infectious Diseases Policy and Programs at the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care at (416) 326-3107 or melissa.helferty@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Nina Arron
Director

Attachment

Population and Public Health Division

Ontario's Rabies Immunization Requirements for Animals Frequently Asked Questions

Why has the ministry changed rabies immunization requirements for animals in Ontario?

Changes to rabies immunization requirements for animals in Ontario were required in order to ensure consistent implementation of public health rabies prevention and control measures across the province to align with the modernization of the Ontario Public Health Standards. Under Section 96(4)(e) of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations requiring and governing the immunization of domestic animals against any disease that may adversely affect the health of any person. O. Reg. 567 (Rabies Immunization) under the HPPA has required rabies vaccination of dogs, cats and certain classes of livestock in Ontario since 1986. However, rabies immunization requirements for animals have previously varied from health unit to health unit. As of July 1, 2018, all rabies immunization requirements will apply uniformly across all health units in the province. This includes immunization of certain classes of livestock which previously only applied in certain health units.

What is meant by “persons responsible for the care or control” of horses, cattle or sheep?

“Persons responsible for the care or control” of an animal is a broad category which would include any individuals involved in looking after the daily or health needs of an animal and/or individuals responsible for handling, showing, or commercially transporting an animal. Examples of individuals who would fit into this category include:

- owners and their immediate family members
- prospective owners
- trainers
- handlers
- drivers
- shippers
- ring crews
- lay and veterinary inspectors
- barn and farm staff
- abattoir workers
- grooms
- hotwalkers
- jockeys and exercise riders
- farriers and hoof trimmers
- sheep shearers
- veterinary staff, including veterinarians and technicians
- artificial insemination and ultrasound technicians

Do animals participating in 4-H and other livestock events (e.g., Royal Winter Fair) have to be vaccinated against rabies?

Animals participating in 4-H events, including clubs, clinics and shows would not be subject to the requirement for rabies vaccinations unless these animals are intended to come into direct contact (*e.g.* petting, feeding) with the general public. When animals are kept or held in areas which may be accessible to the general public, reasonable measures (*e.g.* signage, physical barriers, *etc.*) should be used to prevent persons not authorized to handle or interact with animals at fairs, clinics and shows from accessing animals in holding or stabling areas.

What kind of settings do fall under the scope of the rabies immunization requirements for livestock in Ontario?

Horses, cattle and sheep in settings where the general public is encouraged and/or expected to have direct contact with these animals must be vaccinated against rabies. Examples of settings that fit into this category include petting zoos; corporate birthday party, and other “animal experience” events; and interactive animal exhibits where members of the public are intended to handle or pet the animals. Therapy animals, service animals and riding school horses would also fall under the scope of the immunization requirements.

How often will vaccinations be required?

Section 4(b) of O. Reg. 567 specifies that rabies immunizations must be administered in accordance with the instructions of the manufacturer who produced the vaccine. Reimmunization of animals would therefore be required as per the product monograph of the vaccine administered.

What about horses at racetracks or boarding stables?

Horses at racetracks, training centres and other private facilities like broodmare farms would not fall under the scope of the rabies immunization requirement, as these facilities are not accessible to the general public.

Boarding stables would not fall under the scope of the rabies immunization requirement; however, if boarded horses are easily accessible to riding students or visitors to the riding school, or students need to get riding horses from pastures where both boarded horses and riding school horses are kept, then they would need to be vaccinated.

Why does the rabies immunization requirement apply to horses at riding schools?

Horses at riding schools regularly come into contact with members of the public that come in for riding lessons, including friends and family members of students of the school. Numerous horse bites occurring in riding school settings are reported to health units every year.

Who is responsible for ensuring that animals which need to be immunized against rabies are immunized?

Individuals having the care and custody of an animal are responsible for ensuring that animals in their care and custody are in compliance with applicable rabies immunization requirements. According to veterinary fee guides for Ontario, the cost of rabies immunizations for livestock species should not exceed approximately \$25.00 per animal.

Do we have enough vaccine?

The vast majority of Ontario livestock will not fall into the category of animal requiring rabies vaccination. There are no indications of shortages in the availability of animal rabies vaccines in Ontario. If a situation arose where rabies vaccines were not available due to supply shortages, then, as is the ministry's standard practice in addressing any vaccine supply shortage, interim guidance would be provided until the supply was restored.

Do livestock on community pastures or other pastures have to be vaccinated against rabies?

Only livestock that are accessible to persons other than those responsible for their care and control have to be vaccinated against rabies. Animals on community pastures, or kept on pasture outdoors will not have to be vaccinated against rabies unless they are intended to come into direct contact with the general public. Individuals trespassing on pastures would not be considered members of the general public for this purpose.

How are the rabies immunization requirements for animals enforced in Ontario?

Animal rabies immunization requirements in Ontario are primarily enforced by health units conducting investigations after an animal bite to a human has been reported to public health. However some municipalities and health units may choose to take a more proactive approach in settings such as petting zoos or interactive animal exhibits. Only designated individuals under the Provincial Offences Act, such as public health inspectors or municipal by-law officers, can enforce provincial regulations. Consistent interpretation of immunization requirements across health units will be addressed through communications, training and education sessions for health units prior to the amended regulation coming into force on July 1st, 2018.

How is the ministry planning on notifying the veterinary community of the changes in rabies vaccination requirements?

An implementation plan for the changes to the rabies vaccination requirements coming into force as of July 1, 2018 is being developed by the ministry in collaboration with the College of Veterinarians of Ontario, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, and the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians. The ministry will be engaging with several other veterinary groups (i.e. the Ontario Association of Equine Practitioners, Ontario Association of Bovine Practitioners, and Small Ruminant Veterinarians of Ontario) and is proposing face to face meetings to present the rabies immunization requirements

How is the ministry planning on notifying fairs, producers and other agricultural industry stakeholders?

To date, the ministry has, and given a presentation at the annual conference of the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies in February. A detailed presentation will be given at the next meeting of the Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council to address any questions or concerns that have arisen since December 2018, when a brief summary of the regulatory amendments was provided. In addition, a webinar to agricultural partners such as Beef Farmers of Ontario, OFA, OSF, 4H, the Ontario Association of Community Pastures, Ontario Equestrian, and other agricultural groups are under development.