

On February 27, 2003, the Texas Board of Health approved amendments to Texas Administrative Code, Rabies Control and Eradication; this law went into effect on March 19, 2003. These amendments are posted on the Texas Department of Health Zoonosis Control Division's website at www.tdh.state.tx.us/zoonosis. The major impact of the amendments pertains to rabies vaccination requirements for dogs and cats in Texas. The new language for Section 169.29 (a) is as follows:

The owner or custodian (excluding animal shelters) of each domestic dog or cat shall have the animal vaccinated against rabies by four months of age. The animal must receive a booster within the 12-month interval following the initial vaccination. Every domestic dog or cat must be revaccinated against rabies at a minimum of at least once every three years with a rabies vaccine licensed by the United States Department of Agriculture. The vaccine must be administered according to label recommendations. Livestock (especially those that have frequent contact with humans), domestic ferrets, and wolf-dog hybrids should be vaccinated against rabies. Nothing in this section prohibits a veterinarian and owner or custodian from selecting a more frequent rabies vaccination interval. Health and Safety Code, §§826.014 and 826.015 allow local jurisdictions to establish more frequent rabies vaccination intervals.

In summary,

1. all dogs and cats must receive a second rabies vaccination within one year of receiving their first vaccination, regardless of
 - a. the type of vaccine used or
 - b. the age at which the animal was initially vaccinated.
2. if the animal has received at least two vaccinations and the last vaccination consisted of
 - a. an annual rabies vaccine, the animal must receive a vaccination within 12 months.
 - b. a triennial vaccine, the animal must receive a vaccination within 36 months.
3. if the animal has received at least two vaccinations prior to this amendment and a triennial vaccine was used for the last vaccination, this amendment is retroactive (i.e., the animal's next vaccination will be due within 36 months from the date of its last vaccination).

If you have questions pertaining to these amendments, please contact your Texas Department of Health Regional Zoonosis Control office. You may also contact Dr. Jane Mahlow, Director, Zoonosis Control Division at 512-458-7255 or email The.Vet@tdh.state.tx.us.