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### **Canine Rabies Vaccination and Municipal Licensing Information**

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture (Agency) recognizes that the challenges related to COVID-19 are numerous and evolving. The Agency offers this information regarding companion animal rabies vaccination and municipal dog licensing for veterinarians, pet owners, and municipal offices. The Agency plans to update this information as needed. Veterinarians, pet owners, and municipal offices are encouraged to visit the Agency website regularly for updates and other guidance at <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/covid-19-information>.

Vermont law requires dogs, cats, and ferrets to receive an initial rabies vaccine prior to four months of age, with few exceptions at veterinary discretion, and thereafter to ensure the animal's vaccine status remains current. The owner of a dog must provide evidence of current rabies vaccination status to obtain the required municipal license by April 1 of each year. The Agency understands that the social distancing recommendations and mandates related to COVID-19, while critical to slowing COVID-19's spread, make it difficult for some owners to ensure their pets are vaccinated for rabies and to obtain required municipal dog licenses by April 1.

The Agency cannot change the April 1 deadline for acquisition of municipal dog licenses as it is mandated by statute. Veterinarians and dog owners are encouraged to contact their town offices regarding management of the April 1 deadline.

The Agency urges pet owners to make every effort to have their companion animals vaccinated for rabies per their usual schedule. Many veterinarians continue to offer rabies vaccinations at this time.

The Agency urges veterinarians to evaluate on a case-by-case basis the public health importance of companion animal rabies vaccination relative to the need to amend their business operations because of COVID-19. If a veterinarian determines that it is necessary to postpone an individual animal's rabies vaccination appointment due to business operation interruption, the Agency recommends prioritizing administration of the rabies vaccination once normal veterinary business operations resume. Veterinarians are reminded that companion animals that have *never* received a rabies vaccination pose the most significant public health threat.

For more information, please contact the Agency's animal health office at (802)828-2421 or [agr.animalhealth@vermont.gov](mailto:agr.animalhealth@vermont.gov).

