

# Animal Bite Policy

February, 2014

Iowa Code, Chapter 351.39, directs that the Board of Health shall specify confinement procedures for animals that have bitten any person within the County. Further, Chapter 351.38 directs that persons owning animals that have bitten must report to the Board of Health as well as directing that physicians and veterinarians must report potential rabid animals. The Board of Health considers any animal that bites as a potentially rabid animal.

These policies and procedures are designed to implement the “Rabies Resource Manual” (Manual) prepared by the Iowa Dept. of Agriculture, the Iowa Dept. of Public Health, and the Iowa Veterinary Medical Association. Instructions in the Manual should take precedence over these policies and procedures. A copy of the Manual is available at the Guthrie County Environmental Health Dept. in the Courthouse or online from the Iowa Dept. of Public Health.

Therefore, the Guthrie County Board of Health adopts these procedures for handling of such bites and complaints.

1. The Environmental Health Dept. shall develop a form for recording all such bites and rabies complaints. This form shall be approved by the Board of Health.
2. This form shall be filled out upon an initial report from a doctor, hospital, veterinarian, animal owner, person who was bitten, or any other appropriate party including law enforcement and City officials.
3. In addition to bites, under certain circumstances scratches may be considered the same as bites. If it is uncertain whether there was a bite or scratch, the incident will be considered a bite. If the scratches are deep with significant bleeding and/or likely saliva involvement, then this policy shall be enforced due to the increased potential for rabies transmission.
4. For this section “animal” only refers to dogs, cats, ferrets, and other such pets. Animals shall be handled in the following manner:

a. **Animals with a current rabies immunization**

Cooperative owners may confine the animal on the owner’s premises for the ten-day quarantine in the fashion agreed to with the Dept. At the Dept.’s discretion, a seven day grace period may be allowed for expired vaccinations upon consultation with the doctor and/or veterinarian.

Animals showing ANY signs of illness during the ten days must be taken to a veterinarian immediately and this Dept. notified at the same time.

Should the animal die or somehow get loose and disappear the Dept. must be notified immediately by the owner. ANY dead animal, regardless of manner of death, must be immediately taken to a veterinarian for rabies testing.

Failure of the owner to comply with the quarantine requirements agreed to with the Dept. shall result in the animal being required to complete the quarantine at a commercial kennel or veterinary facility.

At the end of the ten days the Dept. will contact the owner to be assured that the animal is in good health. The Dept. may check on the animal at any time during the ten days.

b. **Animals with no current rabies proof of immunization**

An animal that bites its own owner, or immediate family member living in the home, may be kept on the owner’s premises for the ten-day quarantine in the fashion agreed to with the Dept.

An animal biting any person not living in the home must be kenneled at a veterinary facility or commercial animal kennel for ten days at the owner’s expense. The Dept. must be kept apprised of any changes in the status of the animal’s health.

After ten days the animal is eligible for release to the owner, if no sign of illness is present. The owner must pay the confinement costs at the time of release or have a payment plan in place. If payment is not arranged to the Dept.'s satisfaction, the animal may be euthanized or confiscated for adoption.

If the animal is a canine, it cannot be released until it has received proper rabies vaccination as required in Chapter 351.33 with the cost assessed to the owner.

If the animal shows signs of illness and the veterinarian concurs, the animal shall be euthanized and sent to a laboratory for rabies testing with the costs borne by the owner. The recommendations in the Manual shall be followed.

c. **Stray animals**

Stray dogs and cats that bite individuals and are caught may be either confined at the expense of the County for the ten-day period or sacrificed and rabies tested upon consultation with the veterinarian.

Such animals that may be confined may be disposed of in any appropriate manner designated by the Dept. after the ten-day confinement.

Any wild animal shall be euthanized and sent to a lab for rabies testing. The County shall bear the cost of testing unless the person bitten was negligent.

5. The Dept. shall keep the person who was bitten informed of the on-going status of the animal and its confinement.
6. Any owner who does not surrender an animal subject to these procedures within twelve hours after notification may result in referral to the County Attorney or local law enforcement and the Dept. may obtain a search warrant to seize the animal. Such animals may then be kenneled or euthanized for testing at the discretion of the Dept.
7. Any owner failing to pay any costs associated with these procedures may be filed against in Small Claim's Court for those costs plus interest and Court costs.
8. Any dog reported for biting a subsequent time shall automatically be required to be confined in a commercial kennel or veterinary facility for the ten-day period.
9. The Dept. is not responsible for the transporting of any animals required to be quarantined. Such transporting shall be the owner's responsibility. Stray animals shall be transported by the party that was bitten.
10. The Board of Health assumes that medical professionals will interpret and follow the recommendations in the Manual for all matters regarding patient treatment. This Dept. with the assistance of law enforcement will attempt to assist medical professionals in such matters when the assistance is warranted.

*These procedures were adopted at the March 19, 2014 Guthrie County Board of Health meeting.*