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This is an official DHEC Health Advisory

Change in the Availability of Rabies Vaccine and Human Rabies Immune Globulin from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

New Physician Responsibility

- The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control will no longer provide rabies vaccine or human rabies immune globulin for postexposure prophylaxis (PEP). After September 1, 2009, private providers will be responsible for procuring rabies biologics directly from the manufacturers, distributors or pharmacies.
- DHEC will continue to provide medical consultations to practitioners in determining if rabies prophylaxis is indicated for exposed individuals.
- Providers are reminded that the **South Carolina Code of Laws Section 47-5-90 requires physicians** to report animal bites. Animal bites should be reported to the DHEC county health department in the county where the exposure occurred. In accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws 44-29-10 and Regulations 61-20, DHEC publishes the annual List of Reportable Conditions which defines animal (mammal) bites as immediately reportable by phone.
- Prompt notification of the health department allows DHEC to initiate an animal investigation. Most animal bites and other exposures do not require PEP. Unnecessary PEP can often be avoided if the animal can be located for observation and quarantine and/or for testing.

General information regarding rabies virus

The rabies virus is present in the saliva and cerebrospinal fluid of a rabid mammal and is most commonly transmitted by the bite of a rabid animal. Non-bite exposures can rarely cause rabies. Examples include a scratch from a rabid animal, if saliva could have been introduced into the wound, or contamination of a mucous membrane by saliva from a rabid animal. Contacts with blood, urine, feces, etc. are not considered exposure. There have been no cases of human rabies in South Carolina in over 50 years. Appropriate wound care combined with rabies PEP is almost universally effective in preventing infection.

With more aggressive vaccination programs to prevent rabies in domestic pets, the canine rabies virus variant has recently been eliminated from the U.S. Rabies found in SC animals is primarily due to the raccoon rabies virus variant, which is passed from infected wildlife such as raccoons, foxes, and skunks. The raccoon rabies variant may rarely be found in domestic dogs and cats, when they have been exposed to other animals infected with the rabies virus. Rabies variants found in bats also pose a danger for humans and animals in South Carolina.

Administration of rabies PEP is a medical urgency, not a medical emergency. Clinicians are advised to seek assistance from public health officials for evaluating exposures or determining the need for PEP. Public health officials have expertise in managing potential rabies exposures and public health consultation is known to reduce unnecessary rabies PEP. DHEC medical consultants will assist in determining if PEP is indicated using the following criteria:

1. Whether the exposing animal is available for observation or rabies testing
2. The type of exposure and the severity and location of the wound. For example, head and neck injuries are more urgent exposures for evaluating the need for PEP
3. The epidemiology of animal rabies in the area and the animal species involved
4. The circumstances of the exposure incident and whether animal provocation was involved
5. Whether a non-bite exposure has occurred
6. A risk assessment weighing potential adverse consequences associated with PEP versus the actual risk for the person acquiring rabies

Upon determining that rabies PEP is indicated, the treating physician should order the products directly from a manufacturer, distributor, or pharmacy. DHEC will provide guidance to private providers in ordering rabies PEP biologics if needed. Treating physicians should follow a similar process of billing third party insurers for this service as with claims submissions for other medical treatments/services. There are patient assistance programs for eligible individuals lacking health insurance.

Notice to Readers

In June 2009, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) released provisional recommendations to reduce the number of vaccine doses in the human rabies postexposure prophylaxis (PEP) series from 5 to 4 doses. This recommendation will become final when CDC publishes this guidance in the MMWR. DHEC will notify you when this recommendation is finalized and will continue to notify you of any changes affecting Rabies PEP. Until ACIP recommendations are published in the MMWR, DHEC continues to recommend 5 full doses of rabies vaccine.

For additional information

- For details about rabies PEP, contact your local county health department or the DHEC Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology at 803-898-0861.
- Educational resources are available for practitioners on the DHEC Web site at <http://www.scdhec.net/health/hcpro/>. The provider information found on the DHEC Web site provides information about: Reporting animal exposures; Medical consultation with DHEC to guide PEP decisions; the rabies PEP administration schedule; Manufacturers and distributors of rabies biologics; Patient assistance resources for indigents, and the Rabies Vaccine Information Sheet for Patients.

DHEC Contact Information for Reportable Diseases and Reporting Requirements

Animal bites should be reported to the DHEC county health department in the county where the exposure occurred, by phone. This is consistent with South Carolina Law requiring the reporting of diseases and conditions to your state or local public health department. (State Law # 44-29-10 and Regulation # 61-20) as per the DHEC 2009 List of Reportable Conditions available at: <http://www.scdhec.gov/administration/library/CR-009025.pdf>

Federal HIPAA legislation allows disclosure of protected health information, without consent of the individual, to public health authorities to collect and receive such information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease. (HIPAA 45 CFR §164.512).

DHEC CONTACTS FOR REPORTING ANIMAL BITES AND FOR DHEC MEDICAL CONSULTATION

During working hours animal bite reports are managed by the DHEC Environmental Health Offices and medical consultations are handled by the DHEC medical consultants. After working hours the DHEC on-call staff respond. To assure a prompt response to health care providers' needs, the contact numbers for the Environmental Health Offices and the Medical Consultants are provided below for each county during regular working hours and after hours. Please call for assistance in the county of occurrence.

COUNTY	Animal Bite Reports during working hours	Reporting Animal Bites by Fax	Medical Consultation during working hours	Animal Bite Reports that may require Medical Consultation after working hours
ABBEVILLE	(864) 366-2131	(864) 366-4105	(866) 218-5475	(800) 420-1915
AIKEN	(803) 642-1637	(803) 643-4027	(803) 642-1618	(803) 827-8668 or (800) 614-1519
ALLENDALE	(803) 584-3818	(803) 584-8107	(803) 642-1618	(803) 827-8668 or (800) 614-1519
ANDERSON	(864) 260-5585	(864) 222-3923	(864) 260-4358	(866) 298-4442
BAMBERG	(803) 245-5176	(803) 245-5371	(803) 533-7199	(803) 954-8513
BARNWELL	(803) 541-1036	(803) 541-1192	(803) 642-1618	(803) 827-8668 or (800) 614-1519
BEAUFORT	(843) 525-7627	(843) 770-2079	(843) 525-7603 x 108	(800) 614-4698
BERKELEY	(843) 719-4649	(843) 719-4321	(843) 953-0060	(843) 219-8470
CALHOUN	(803) 874-2037	(803) 874-4693	(803) 533-7199	(803) 954-8513
CHARLESTON	(843) 202-7020	(843) 202-7050	(843) 953-0060	(843) 219-8470
CHEROKEE	(864) 487-2705	(864) 487-2728	(864) 596-2227 x 210	(800) 993-1186
CHESTER	(803) 385-6152	(803) 581-3815	(803) 286-9948	(866) 867-3886
CHESTERFIELD	(843) 623-2117	(843) 623-3066	(843) 661-4830	(843) 660-8145
CLARENDON	(803) 435-2592	(803) 435-4712	(803) 773-5511	(877) 831-4647
COLLETON	(843) 549-2373	(843) 549-6845	(843) 525-7603 x 108	(800) 614-4698
DARLINGTON	(843) 398-4401	(843) 398-4418	(843) 661-4830	(843) 660-8145
DILLON	(843) 774-0648	(843) 774-2823	(843) 661-4830	(843) 660-8145
DORCHESTER	(843) 821-9524	(843) 832-0765	(843) 953-0060	(843) 219-8470
EDGEFIELD	(803) 637-4035	(803) 637-4039	(866) 218-5475	(800) 420-1915
FAIRFIELD	(803) 635-6481	(803) 635-1410	(803) 576-2749	(888) 554-9915
FLORENCE	(843) 661-4728	(843) 317-4044	(843) 661-4830	(843) 660-8145
GEORGETOWN	(843) 546-3613	(843) 546-2700	(843) 915-8804	(843) 381-6710
GREENVILLE	(864) 282-4146	(864) 282-4371	(864) 282-4139	(800) 993-1186
GREENWOOD	(864) 227-5915	(864) 942-3680	(866) 218-5475	(800) 420-1915
HAMPTON	(803) 943-3878	(803) 943-1067	(843) 525-7603 x 108	(800) 614-4698
HORRY	(843) 915-8801	(843) 365-0099	(843) 915-8804	(843) 381-6710
JASPER	(843) 726-7792	(843) 726-5320	(843) 525-7603 x 108	(800) 614-4698
KERSHAW	(803) 425-6051	(803) 424-1611	(803) 773-5511	(877) 831-4647
LANCASTER	(803) 285-6901	(803) 286-5418	(803) 286-9948	(866) 867-3886
LAURENS	(864) 833-0000	(864) 833-6400	(866) 218-5475	(800) 420-1915
LEE	(803) 484-6612	(803) 484-6314	(803) 773-5511	(877) 831-4647
LEXINGTON	(803) 785-8113	(803) 785-8211	(803) 576-2749	(888) 554-9915
MARION	(843) 423-8277	(843) 423-2236	(843) 661-4830	(843) 660-8145
MARLBORO	(843) 479-6801	(843) 479-9658	(843) 661-4830	(843) 660-8145
MCCORMICK	(864) 366-2131	(864) 366-4105	(866) 218-5475	(800) 420-1915
NEWBERRY	(803) 321-2175	(803) 321-2300	(803) 576-2749	(888) 554-9915
OCONEE	(864) 638-4185	(864) 638-4186	(864) 260-4358	(866) 298-4442
ORANGEBURG	(803) 536-9105	(803) 533-7113	(803) 533-7199	(803) 954-8513
PICKENS	(864) 898-5832	(864) 898-5858	(864) 282-4139	(800) 993-1186
RICHLAND	(803) 576-2910	(803) 576-2935	(803) 576-2749	(888) 554-9915
SALUDA	(864) 445-2141	(864) 445-7668	(866) 218-5475	(800) 420-1915
SPARTANBURG	(864)-596-3415	(864) 596-3920	(864) 596-2227 x 210	(800) 993-1186
SUMTER	(803) 773-5511	(803) 773-6366	(803) 773-5511	(877) 831-4647
UNION	(864) 429-1690	(864) 429-1697	(864) 596-2227 x 210	(800) 993-1186
WILLIAMSBURG	(843) 355-9378	(846) 355-9474	(843) 915-8804	(843) 381-6710
YORK	(803) 909-7379	(803) 909-7397	(803) 286-9948	(866) 867-3886

DHEC Bureau of Disease Control, Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology Phone: (803) 898-0861 (8:30 – 5:00, M-F)

If the county number for medical consultation is not working, call on nights/weekends: 1-888-847-0902