

Onset and duration of action

It should be noted that vaccination does not necessarily equate to immunisation. Immunisation is dependent on several factors, including:

- Immunocompetence- having an immune system that is capable of mounting an appropriate response to the vaccine
- Affected by nutrition, level of parasitism, overall health, stress level, breed specifics
- Proper administration, storage, and general handling of the vaccine
- Degree of exposure to an antigenic agent- frequency and level of exposure
- Vaccine type-not all vaccines are created equally

Apart from the points mentioned above, generally speaking, an animal is considered immunized after 30 days of vaccine administration. Rabies vaccines are valid for a period of 1 or 3 years, depending on your animal's age and vaccination history.



Rabies blood titres

A rabies antibody blood titre may be performed to assess your pet's response to the most recent rabies vaccination. The level of antibodies produced by your pet's immune system is measured in numerical form. Levels of 0.5 IU/ml or higher are considered passing, or successful titres. If required, titres should be performed at a minimum of 30 days following the most recent rabies vaccination.

Titres are only required for travel to specific countries (e.g. Jamaica, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa), or in order to return to the Cayman Islands. At present, titres are not required for travel to the USA, Canada, the UK, or the EU. Titres have a validity of 12 months/1 year only, regardless of the validity of the rabies vaccination. Locally, titre test blood draws are only performed by private veterinary clinics, and then the blood is sent overseas for testing. Please contact your local veterinarian for more information on pricing and timeframe to receive titre test results.



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Rabies Vaccines: What you need to know



What is rabies?

Rabies is a virus shed by the saliva of infected animals. The disease is most often transmitted by bites. Rabies is a zoonotic disease, meaning that it can be transmitted from animals to the human population. Clinical signs of rabies develop over time, starting with lethargy, fever, vomiting, and anorexia, then progressing to neurological dysfunction, weakness, paralysis, seizures, abnormal and aggressive behaviour, salivation, difficulty breathing/swallowing, and eventually death. Rabies is incredibly difficult to treat, but can be prevented with vaccination.



Rabies and the Cayman Islands

The Cayman Islands is a rabies-free country. As such, animals are only vaccinated against rabies in anticipation of disease exposure, i.e., for travel purposes. Vaccination is either performed in order to meet the requirements of the importing country, or to meet the re-entry requirements for The Cayman Islands. For anticipated travel, it is imperative to consult the relevant regulatory authority of the importing country regarding pet entry requirements.

Rabies vaccination protocol in the Cayman Islands

A killed rabies vaccine is used intramuscularly in the rear right leg- think 'Right' for 'Rabies'! All animals receive the standard approved dose of 1ml, regardless of age, weight, or breed. The vaccination protocol used in the Cayman Islands is as follows:

- Initial vaccination at 12 weeks/3 months of age or older
- Booster vaccination at a minimum of 30 days after the initial vaccination for pets born in the Cayman Islands who intend to undergo titre testing
- Follow-up vaccination 12 months after booster vaccination (prior to the expiry date of the current vaccine)
- Vaccinations every 3-years thereafter

Note that all animals must be fitted with an ISO compliant microchip prior to receiving a rabies vaccine. The microchipping can be done with a private veterinary clinic or with the DOA at the time of rabies vaccination.

Lapses in the vaccination schedule may result in animals reverting to the annual schedule. Please contact the CIDOA Veterinary Services team at ci.agriculturevs@gov.ky for further guidance on scheduling your pet's rabies vaccination.



What can I expect from my pet's rabies vaccination?

The most common and normal responses to vaccination are lethargy (tiredness), decreased appetite (lasting 1-2 days usually), and a localised lump at the vaccination site (lasting 1-2 days usually). The term 'vaccine reactions' refers to more serious or adverse effects, which may include vomiting, diarrhoea, breathing difficulty, facial swelling, or hives.

Vaccine reactions are rare with the Merial Imrab 3TF vaccine; however, they are not impossible. For this reason, we suggest that all animals are monitored for a minimum of 2-3 hours after receiving a rabies vaccine. If any unusual signs or reactions are observed, your pet's veterinarian should be contacted immediately.

Regarding routine 'puppy' and 'kitten' vaccines, it is recommended that these vaccines are spaced out at a minimum of two weeks either side of your pet receiving a rabies vaccine. This will allow for your pet's immune system to adequately respond to both sets of vaccines after their respective administration.

