

## CHAPTER 720

### RABIES PREVENTION AND SHELTER PROVISIONS

#### §3916. Rabies vaccinations

**1. Required for cats.** Except as provided in subsection 4, an owner or keeper of a cat over 3 months of age shall have that cat vaccinated against rabies. The rabies vaccine must be administered by a licensed veterinarian, a licensed veterinary technician under the direct supervision or indirect supervision of a licensed veterinarian or a certified rabies vaccinator. Upon receiving an initial vaccination, a cat is considered protected for one year and an owner or keeper of that cat shall get a booster vaccination for that cat one year after the initial vaccination and subsequent booster vaccinations at intervals that do not exceed the intervals recommended by a national association of state public health veterinarians for the type of vaccine administered.  
[PL 2025, c. 141, §4 (AMD).]

**1-A. Required for dogs.** Except as provided in subsection 4, an owner or keeper of a dog, within 30 days after the dog attains 3 months of age, shall have that dog vaccinated against rabies. The rabies vaccine must be administered by a licensed veterinarian, a licensed veterinary technician under the direct supervision or indirect supervision of a licensed veterinarian or a certified rabies vaccinator. Upon receiving an initial vaccination, a dog is considered protected for one year and an owner or keeper of that dog shall get a booster vaccination for that dog one year after the initial vaccination and subsequent booster vaccinations at intervals that do not exceed the intervals recommended by a national association of state public health veterinarians for the type of vaccine administered. A wolf hybrid is required to be vaccinated in accordance with this subsection. The procedure prescribed under Title 22, chapter 251, subchapter 5 for a wolf hybrid suspected of having rabies does not change based on proof that the wolf hybrid has received a rabies vaccination.  
[PL 2025, c. 141, §4 (AMD).]

**2. Certificate.** A licensed veterinarian who vaccinates or supervises the vaccination of an animal, a licensed veterinary technician who vaccinates an animal under the direct supervision or indirect supervision of a licensed veterinarian or a certified rabies vaccinator who vaccinates an animal shall issue to the owner or keeper a certificate of rabies vaccination approved by the State and shall indicate on the certificate the date by which a booster vaccination is required pursuant to subsection 1 or 1-A, whichever is applicable.  
[PL 2025, c. 141, §4 (AMD).]

**2-A. Notice to department.** A veterinarian, licensed veterinary technician under the direct supervision or indirect supervision of a licensed veterinarian or certified rabies vaccinator who issues a certificate of rabies vaccination for a dog pursuant to subsection 2 shall, within 30 days of issuing the certificate, forward by mail, e-mail or fax a copy of that certificate to the department. The department shall send a copy of the certificate by mail, e-mail or fax to the clerk of the municipality in which the owner or keeper resides. If the owner or keeper resides in the unorganized territory, the department shall send a copy of the certificate to the dog recorder in that unorganized territory or, in the absence of a duly authorized dog recorder, to the dog recorder in the nearest municipality or unorganized territory in the same county in which the owner or keeper resides. The department may retain a copy or electronic record of the rabies certificate. The department may accumulate certificates received and distribute them periodically to the appropriate municipalities and dog recorders. Distributions must be made no fewer than 4 times a year.  
[PL 2025, c. 141, §4 (AMD).]

**3. Enforcement.** A humane agent, an animal control officer or a law enforcement officer may ask an owner or keeper of a cat or dog to present proof of a certificate of rabies vaccination from the State. [PL 2005, c. 422, §5 (AMD).]

**4. Exception.** Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter to the contrary, an animal shelter operated by a nonprofit organization is not required to vaccinate an abandoned or stray cat or dog received by the shelter.

An owner or keeper of a cat or dog is exempt from the requirements of subsection 1 or 1-A, whichever is applicable, if a medical reason exists that precludes the vaccination of the cat or dog. To qualify for this exemption, the owner or keeper must have a written statement signed by a licensed veterinarian that includes a description of the cat or dog and the medical reason that precludes the vaccination. [PL 2025, c. 141, §4 (AMD).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 1991, c. 779, §26 (NEW). PL 1993, c. 468, §9 (AMD). PL 1995, c. 490, §7 (AMD). PL 1997, c. 704, §§3-5 (AMD). PL 2005, c. 422, §§3-6 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 119, §1 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 439, §8 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 99, §§6, 7 (AMD). PL 2025, c. 141, §4 (AMD).

#### §3916-A. Definitions

As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings. [PL 2025, c. 141, §5 (NEW).]

**1. Direct supervision.** "Direct supervision" has the same meaning as in Title 32, section 4853, subsection 4-A.

[PL 2025, c. 141, §5 (NEW).]

**2. Indirect supervision.** "Indirect supervision" has the same meaning as in Title 32, section 4853, subsection 4-B.

[PL 2025, c. 141, §5 (NEW).]

**3. Licensed veterinarian.** "Licensed veterinarian" has the same meaning as in Title 32, section 4853, subsection 5.

[PL 2025, c. 141, §5 (NEW).]

**4. Licensed veterinary technician.** "Licensed veterinary technician" has the same meaning as in Title 32, section 4853, subsection 11.

[PL 2025, c. 141, §5 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2025, c. 141, §5 (NEW).

#### §3917. Antirabies clinics

The following provisions apply to low-cost antirabies clinics. [PL 1991, c. 779, §26 (NEW).]

**1. Clinic establishment.** The department shall facilitate the establishment of low-cost antirabies clinics at locations and on dates as appropriate. At least one low-cost antirabies clinic must be conducted annually in each county. In facilitating the establishment of antirabies clinics, the department shall cooperate with local veterinarians and local organizations. When other arrangements cannot be made for a licensed veterinarian to vaccinate or to supervise vaccinations by an animal technician at a low-cost clinic, a veterinarian employed by the department, a licensed veterinary technician under the direct supervision or indirect supervision of a licensed veterinarian or a certified rabies vaccinator shall administer the vaccinations.

[PL 2025, c. 141, §6 (AMD).]

**2. Veterinarians participating in low-cost antirabies clinics.** This subsection applies to a veterinarian licensed under Title 32, chapter 71-A or an assistant under the direction of the veterinarian providing professional services within the scope of the veterinarian's license who participates in a low-cost antirabies clinic established under this section. Adherence by the veterinarian or assistant to the standards of care within the profession creates a rebuttable presumption that the conduct of the veterinarian or assistant was not negligent.

[PL 1991, c. 779, §26 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 1991, c. 779, §26 (NEW). PL 1993, c. 468, §10 (AMD). PL 2025, c. 141, §6 (AMD).

#### §3918. Violation

A person who violates this chapter commits a civil violation for which a forfeiture of not more than \$100 may be adjudged. [PL 1997, c. 704, §6 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 704, §6 (NEW).

#### §3919. Seizure of stray cats and small animals

**1. Definition.** For the purposes of this chapter, a "stray cat" means a cat on the premises of a person other than the owner of the cat, without the consent of the owner or occupant of the premises, on a public street or on other public property, except under the physical control of the owner.

[PL 2001, c. 363, §3 (NEW).]

**2. Seizure by animal control officer.** An animal control officer or person acting in that capacity may seize or humanely trap a stray cat or small animal and deliver it to an animal shelter as provided for in section 3919-A or section 3919-E or to the owner, if the owner is known. If ownership can not be established, such a cat or small animal may be handled as a homeless cat or small animal for the purpose of acceptance and disposition by an animal shelter.

[PL 2013, c. 115, §7 (AMD).]

**3. Person finding stray cat.** A person finding a stray cat or small animal and not knowing the owner or residence of the cat or small animal may take that cat or small animal to the animal shelter designated by the municipality in which the cat or small animal was found.

[PL 2013, c. 115, §7 (AMD).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2001, c. 363, §3 (NEW). PL 2013, c. 115, §7 (AMD).

#### §3919-A. Procedure for acceptance and disposition of cats by animal shelter

An animal shelter to which a cat is taken may accept the cat unless the shelter is in quarantine. An animal shelter accepting a cat shall comply with the provisions of this section. [PL 2001, c. 363, §3 (NEW).]

**1. Cats with identification.** An animal shelter that accepts a cat with cat identification shall make a reasonable attempt to notify the owner by telephone or by sending a written notice within 24 hours of accepting the cat. Except as provided in subsections 4 and 5, the animal shelter shall hold the cat for a period of 6 days beginning on and including the day of acceptance. If the owner claims the cat within the 6-day period, the animal shelter shall release the cat to the owner upon payment of any municipal impoundment fee and actual fees incurred for food, shelter and veterinary care. Upon expiration of the 6-day period, ownership of the cat is vested with the animal shelter and the animal shelter may then handle the cat as a homeless cat for disposition in accordance with subsection 2.

[PL 2001, c. 363, §3 (NEW).]

**2. Homeless cats.** When an animal shelter accepts a cat under section 3919 and that cat does not have cat identification, the animal shelter shall hold the cat for not less than 48 hours or, for feral cats, not less than 24 hours. After the 24-hour or 48-hour period, the animal shelter may treat the cat as a homeless cat and may:

A. Except as provided in section 3938-A, offer the cat for adoption, sell or give away the cat; or [PL 2007, c. 439, §9 (AMD).]

B. Otherwise dispose of the cat humanely in accordance with Title 17, chapter 42, subchapter 4. [PL 2003, c. 405, §8 (AMD).]

An animal shelter may not sell or give a cat to a research facility.

[PL 2009, c. 343, §11 (AMD).]

**3. Owner's claim after 6-day period.** An owner may reacquire a cat at any time prior to its disposition under subsection 2 upon payment of any municipal impoundment fee and actual fees incurred for food, shelter and veterinary care and any other reasonable fee imposed by the animal shelter.

[PL 2001, c. 363, §3 (NEW).]

**4. Euthanasia for severely sick or severely injured cat or small animal.** A humane agent, an animal control officer or an animal shelter may authorize in writing the immediate euthanasia of a severely sick or severely injured cat or small animal upon determining that the following conditions are met:

A. The animal control officer of the municipality where the cat or small animal was found has been notified or, if the cat or small animal has identification, the owner of the cat or small animal has been notified; and [PL 2015, c. 223, §4 (AMD).]

B. A veterinarian states in writing that the cat's or small animal's recovery from its injury or illness, given reasonable time and reasonable care, is doubtful or that the cat or small animal presents a danger to the public. [PL 2015, c. 223, §4 (AMD).]

Notwithstanding paragraphs A and B, a veterinarian may authorize immediate euthanasia if, in the veterinarian's judgment, there is no possibility of recovery for a severely injured or severely sick cat or small animal.

[PL 2015, c. 223, §4 (AMD).]

**5. Immunity.** A veterinarian, a humane agent, an animal control officer or an animal shelter, including a person employed by an animal shelter, is not civilly liable to the owner of a cat or small animal for the loss of that cat or small animal resulting from actions taken in compliance with this section.

Nothing in this subsection grants to an animal shelter or person any immunity from liability arising from the gift, sale or other transference of a cat or small animal to a research facility in violation of subsection 2.

[PL 2015, c. 223, §5 (AMD).]

## SECTION HISTORY

PL 2001, c. 363, §3 (NEW). PL 2003, c. 405, §8 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 439, §§9, 10 (AMD). PL 2009, c. 343, §11 (AMD). PL 2015, c. 223, §§4, 5 (AMD).

### §3919-B. Disposition of pet when owner is institutionalized

Notwithstanding sections 3913 and 3919-A and except as provided in Title 17, section 1021, when a person brings a pet to an animal shelter because the owner of that pet is incarcerated or hospitalized or under the process described in Title 14, section 6025-A, that person shall provide the animal shelter with the name and last known address of the pet's owner and the name and address of a facility where

the person is incarcerated or hospitalized. The person bringing the pet to the shelter shall also provide the shelter with that person's name and address and that person's relationship to the owner or the official capacity in which that person is acting to enforce the animal welfare laws. The animal shelter may accept the pet unless the shelter is in quarantine. An animal shelter accepting a pet under this section shall comply with the provisions of this section. [PL 2023, c. 336, §1 (AMD).]

**1. Notice.** An animal shelter that accepts a pet under this section shall within 24 hours of receiving the pet send a notice by mail, return receipt requested, to the owner of the pet at the owner's last known address. The notice must inform the owner of the provisions of this section. [PL 2009, c. 343, §12 (AMD).]

**2. Release of pet.** Upon payment of costs incurred for food, shelter and veterinary care, an animal shelter shall release a pet accepted under this section to its owner or to a person who is designated in a letter signed by the owner as acting on the owner's behalf. [PL 2003, c. 405, §9 (NEW).]

**3. Transfer of ownership; disposition of pet.** If an owner fails to arrange for release of a pet in accordance with subsection 2 within 10 days of the pet's acceptance by the shelter, ownership of the pet is vested with the animal shelter upon expiration of the 10-day period and the animal shelter may:

- A. Except for a wolf hybrid, offer the pet for adoption or sell or give away the pet; or [PL 2011, c. 100, §8 (AMD).]
- B. Dispose of the pet humanely in accordance with Title 17, chapter 42, subchapter 4. [PL 2003, c. 405, §9 (NEW).]

An animal shelter may not sell or give a pet to a research facility. An animal shelter may not sell, give away or offer for adoption a wolf hybrid. Ownership of a wolf hybrid may be transferred only in accordance with section 3921-B, subsection 3. [PL 2011, c. 100, §8 (AMD).]

**4. Claims.** When an owner does not arrange for the release of a pet under subsection 2, the animal shelter is entitled to receive from the department \$4 a day for food and shelter for the pet for a maximum of 10 days. [PL 2003, c. 405, §9 (NEW).]

**5. Immunity.** A person who brings a pet to an animal shelter in accordance with this section is not civilly liable to the owner for the loss of that pet resulting from the release, transfer or disposition of the pet in accordance with subsection 2 or 3. A veterinarian, a humane agent, an animal control officer or an animal shelter, including a person employed by an animal shelter, is not civilly liable to the owner for the loss of that pet resulting from the release, transfer or disposition of the pet in accordance with subsection 2 or 3.

Nothing in this subsection grants to an animal shelter or person any immunity from liability arising from the gift, sale or other transfer of a pet to a research facility in violation of subsection 3. [PL 2003, c. 405, §9 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2003, c. 405, §9 (NEW). PL 2009, c. 343, §12 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 100, §8 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 336, §1 (AMD).

#### §3919-C. Animal held pending court decision

When an animal shelter holds an animal at the request or with the approval of the person who seized the animal pending an investigation or disposition by the court of an alleged violation of chapter 739 or Title 17, chapter 42, the shelter is entitled to receive from the person who seized the animal monetary compensation in accordance with this section for the period for which food and shelter are furnished to the animal. For the purposes of this section, "person who seized the animal" includes a humane agent,

law enforcement or an animal control officer permitted by law to obtain a search warrant or to seize animals ex parte. [PL 2015, c. 223, §6 (AMD).]

**1. Compensation for dogs and cats.** Compensation for a dog or cat is \$15 a day. Compensation for a female cat or dog with a litter that has not been weaned is \$18 a day. [PL 2021, c. 696, §3 (AMD).]

**2. Equines.** Compensation for an equine is \$20 a day. [PL 2021, c. 696, §4 (AMD).]

**3. Livestock.** Except for equines, fowl and rabbits, compensation for a livestock animal is between \$5 and \$20 a day as determined by the department based on the size of the animal. [PL 2021, c. 696, §5 (AMD).]

**4. Other animals.** Compensation for a rabbit is \$2 a day. Compensation for a bird, including poultry, is \$1 a day. Compensation for other animals is as determined by the department. [PL 2007, c. 439, §11 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2003, c. 405, §9 (NEW). PL 2007, c. 439, §11 (AMD). PL 2015, c. 223, §6 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 696, §§3-5 (AMD).

#### §3919-D. Temporary animal shelter

The department may temporarily impound animals within an enclosure other than a licensed animal shelter, and such an enclosure constitutes a temporary animal shelter. When animals are held at a temporary animal shelter for more than 21 days, the shelter must comply with the standards established by the department for licensed animal shelters. [PL 2007, c. 702, §7 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2007, c. 702, §7 (NEW).

#### §3919-E. Disposition of small animals

**1. Small animals.** When an animal shelter accepts a small animal under section 3919 and the animal does not have identification, the animal shelter shall hold that small animal for not less than 48 hours. After the expiration of the 48-hour period, the animal shelter may treat the small animal as homeless and may:

A. Offer the small animal for adoption, sell the small animal, give away the small animal or transfer the small animal to an appropriate facility that can provide for that specific type of small animal; or [PL 2015, c. 223, §7 (AMD).]

B. Otherwise dispose of the small animal humanely in accordance with Title 17, chapter 42, subchapter 4. [PL 2013, c. 115, §8 (NEW).]

An animal shelter may not sell or give any small animal to a research facility. [PL 2015, c. 223, §7 (AMD).]

**2. Exceptions.** A small animal that is subject to permit requirements of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife under Title 12, chapter 915 may not be adopted or have its ownership transferred without the permission of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. [PL 2013, c. 115, §8 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 2013, c. 115, §8 (NEW). PL 2015, c. 223, §7 (AMD).

#### §3920. Certified rabies vaccinator

**1. Appointment and certification.** Except as provided in subsection 5, the commissioner, in consultation with the Animal Welfare Advisory Council, as established by Title 5, section 12004-I, subsection 2-C and as described in section 3906-C, shall appoint one or more persons in each county to administer rabies vaccines to animals. Upon initial appointment, a person must complete training in accordance with section 3906-B, subsection 18 in order to become a certified rabies vaccinator. A certified rabies vaccinator serves in a volunteer capacity unless the person is an employee of the State or an animal shelter licensed under section 3932-A. A certified rabies vaccinator must be under the direct supervision or indirect supervision of a licensed veterinarian to administer rabies vaccines to animals. A humane agent may serve as a certified rabies vaccinator. A certified rabies vaccinator is authorized to act until termination of appointment by the commissioner or until resignation of the certified rabies vaccinator.

[PL 2025, c. 141, §7 (NEW).]

**2. Scope and duration.** A certified rabies vaccinator shall acknowledge in writing that the certified rabies vaccinator understands the scope and duration of service.

[PL 2025, c. 141, §7 (NEW).]

**3. Immunity from civil liability.** A certified rabies vaccinator is not civilly liable to any party for actions made in accordance with this chapter.

[PL 2025, c. 141, §7 (NEW).]

**4. Rulemaking.** The commissioner shall adopt rules to establish procedures for appointment and certification of certified rabies vaccinators. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

[PL 2025, c. 141, §7 (NEW).]

**5. Animal shelter requests.** An animal shelter licensed under section 3932-A may submit a request to the commissioner that a member of the animal shelter's staff be appointed as a certified rabies vaccinator in a limited capacity. The request must be submitted in writing by the animal shelter's veterinarian of reference. A certified rabies vaccinator authorized under this subsection may administer vaccines only to animals in the care of the animal shelter or at an antirabies clinic established pursuant to section 3917.

[PL 2025, c. 141, §7 (NEW).]

## SECTION HISTORY

PL 2025, c. 141, §7 (NEW).

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