



Wisconsin state law requires that any dog or cat that bites a person be quarantined for ten days so that it can be observed for signs of rabies. This brochure explains what such a quarantine involves and gives the reasons why these measures must be taken. Note that the information in this brochure applies only to dogs and cats that have bitten a person, and that the requirements of the quarantine vary depending on whether the animal is current on its rabies immunizations.



Why require a 10-day quarantine period?

The 10-day quarantine period ensures that the dog or cat remains available so that it can be observed for signs of rabies. If the animal remains well during the 10 days, this indicates it did not have the rabies virus in its saliva at the time of the bite, and therefore the bite victim does not have to receive an expensive and unpleasant series of shots to prevent rabies. This is why it is so important that the dog or cat under quarantine be strictly confined at all times to ensure that it cannot run away or be injured.

The 10-day confinement and observation period for dogs and cats that bite humans has stood the test of time as a way to prevent human rabies. This quarantine period avoids the need to destroy the biting dog or cat in order to test its brain for the rabies virus.

What happens if I don't comply?

State law provides for a fine of \$100 to \$1,000 or 60 days imprisonment or both for failure to comply with a quarantine order.

Where can I find more information?

- datcp.wi.gov/animals
- Wisconsin Statutes section 95.21

This brochure was developed in collaboration with the Bureau of Public Health and the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene.



**Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,
Trade & Consumer Protection**

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Rabies Bites!



Facts about the 10-day quarantine requirement



What is rabies?

Rabies is a deadly viral disease that can be prevented but not cured. The virus attacks the brain of warm-blooded animals, including humans. It is usually transmitted through the bite of an animal that has the virus in its saliva. When a healthy dog or cat bites a person, there is a remote possibility that the dog or cat could have the disease without showing outward signs of rabies. In these rare cases, the animal will develop recognizable signs of rabies in a few days allowing time to treat the bite victim preventively for rabies exposure.

Because rabies can take time to show its effects, Wisconsin law requires that any dog or cat that bites a person be quarantined for ten days so that it can be observed for signs of rabies. Here you will find information about the quarantine process and why it is necessary to public health.

How could your dog or cat get rabies?

All mammals are susceptible to rabies. In Wisconsin, skunks and bats are the most likely animals to carry the rabies virus, although rabies also has occurred sporadically in dogs, cats, foxes, raccoons and livestock.

Most commonly, unvaccinated dogs or cats that are given the freedom to mingle with wildlife or stray animals are at greatest risk for acquiring the virus. Owners should minimize their pet's exposure to wildlife and strays by feeding pets indoors, keeping lids on outdoor trash receptacles and observing leash laws.

What will happen if my dog or cat bites someone?

This is what will happen...	Vaccinated	Not Vaccinated
An officer* will order the animal quarantined for a period of at least 10 days after the bite.	Mandatory quarantine and owner must show a valid rabies certificate or tag	Mandatory quarantine if owner cannot show proof of vaccination
Animal must be isolated within 24 hours.	Can be at home in strict isolation; if not possible, animal may be ordered to an isolation facility	Must be held at a designated isolation facility
Examined by a licensed veterinarian.	At least 3 times; on the first day, on the last day and one day in between; only time animal can leave the home	At least 3 times; on the first day, on the last day and one day in between
Quarantine can be released if the veterinarian certifies that the animal has no signs of rabies.	Yes, but if animal displays signs of illness, veterinarian must be notified immediately	Yes, but if animal displays signs of illness, veterinarian must be notified immediately
Quarantine may be extended if the clinical signs warrant.	Yes, but rare	Yes, but rare
Rabies vaccination is given AFTER the observation period.	Not applicable	Yes
Animal shows signs of rabies during observation period.	Animal is humanely euthanized and brain sent for testing	Animal is humanely euthanized and brain sent for testing
Owner is responsible for all costs related to the quarantine action.	Yes, three veterinary visits	Yes, isolation facility charge, veterinary visits, rabies vaccination

* An officer can be a public health official, law enforcement officer, DNR warden or humane officer.

