Legal Authority
The primary responsibility for the control of rabies in Georgia rests with county boards of health. O.C.G.A. § 31-19-1 empowers and requires each county board of health to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations for the prevention and control of rabies.

What are the Principles of Rabies Control?
As a zoonotic disease, the foundations of rabies control rest upon preventing the disease in animals, preventing the disease in humans, and methods to decrease the likelihood of exposure between humans and animal rabies vectors. Public education regarding rabies exposure risk is paramount. The following principles apply:

- **Rabies Exposure.** Rabies is transmitted only when the virus is introduced into bite wounds, open cuts in skin, or onto mucous membranes.

- **Human Rabies Prevention.** Rabies in humans can be prevented either by eliminating exposures to rabid animals or by providing exposed persons with prompt local treatment of wounds combined with appropriate post-exposure prophylaxis (including both passive antibody administration and active immunization with cell culture vaccines). In addition, pre-exposure vaccination should be offered to persons in high-risk groups, such as veterinarians, animal handlers, and certain laboratory workers.

- **Domestic Animals.** Local governments should initiate and maintain effective programs to ensure vaccination of all dogs, cats, and ferrets and to remove strays and unwanted animals from the community. Recommended vaccination procedures and the licensed animal vaccines are specified in Parts I and II of the *Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control* (see pages 46-48). In addition, adjunct procedures which enhance rabies control include: 1) standard identification systems to verify animal rabies vaccination status; 2) local domestic animal licensure requirements; 3) requirement of interstate health certificates prior to domestic animal travel; 4) implementation of regulations governing imported domestic animals; 5) establishment of a local animal control agency responsible for stray control, leash laws, and issuance of citations for failure to vaccinate animals.

- **Rabies in Wildlife.** The control of rabies among wildlife reservoirs is difficult. Vaccination of free-ranging wildlife or selective population reduction is not always feasible. Rabies control relies upon prevention of exposure to wildlife rabies reservoirs. This can be accomplished via
public education about wildlife rabies risk and recommendations regarding avoidance of contact with wild animals.¹

What is the Post Exposure Protocol?
For a person:
• Thoroughly clean the wound immediately with soap and water.
• Contact your doctor and GA Poison Control immediately.
• If the animal that bit the pet can be captured, submit the brain for testing.

For a pet:
• If the animal that bit the pet can be captured, submit the brain for testing.
• If the animal is negative and your pet is not vaccinated, get your pet vaccinated.
• If the animal tests positive and your pet is current on the rabies vaccine, talk with a veterinarian about a booster shot. Also, monitor your pet for 45 days after the booster for any symptoms of rabies.
• If the animal tests positive and your pet is unvaccinated or does not have a complete vaccination history, the recommendation is to euthanize the pet or to keep the pet in strict isolation for six months. The management of animals potentially exposed to rabies should be coordinated with local Environmental Health.²

What are some challenges of rabies control?
• Lack of ability for Animal Shelter Employees to vaccinate incoming animals. All rabies innoculations must be administered by a licensed veterinarian.

• The National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) recommends NOT vaccinating animals with rabies vaccine during a 10 day quarantine for biting a human because of the possibility that the vaccine may potentially modify the clinical presentation of rabies "if" the animal has the disease. This waiting period limits the time allowed for treatment of the animal.

• While the exposure rate is low, albeit deadly, for wildlife rabies attacks, there can be confusion of authority. In some cases, the Department of Natural Resources would be the authority in charge, while in others, the local Animal Control office would be in control.

Additional Resources
• CDC Rabies – http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/
• WHO Rabies – http://www.who.int/topics/rabies/en/


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Signs of Rabies in Animals:
Animal may stagger, appear restless, be aggressive, have difficulty walking, seem overly friendly, or appear to be choking.

Signs of Rabies in Humans:
Person may have fever, headache, tingling or numbing sensation in limbs, and general malaise. Later, signs of encephalopathy such as insomnia, anxiety, confusion, excitation, hallucinations, agitation, hyper salivation, difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia (fear of water) may appear.
The Complete Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control

GEORGIA RABIES CONTROL LAW
Administrative rules and regulations—As to control of rabies, see Official Compilation of Rules and Regulations of the State of Georgia, Rules of Department of Human Resources, Chapter 290-5-2.

I. OPINIONS OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Control of rabies generally is delegated to county boards of health, and control of dangerous drugs is vested with the State Board of pharmacy and state drug inspector (now director of Georgia Drugs and Narcotics Agency). 1975 Op. Atty. Gen. No. 75-23.

Expense of confining animals included in county board’s budget—Local county boards of health should prescribe rules for prevention and control of rabies by providing for vaccination, tagging, and certification of dogs, and for confinement of any animal which exhibits any signs of rabies; cost of such confinement would be an expense of county board of health to be included in its budget which is submitted to local taxing authorities under provision of section 31-3-14, 1965-66 Op. Atty. Gen. No. 65-21.


II. OFFICIAL CODE 31-19, CONTROL OF RABIES

31-19-1. Responsibility for Control

Each county board of health shall have primary responsibility for the control of rabies within its jurisdiction. Such boards, in addition to their other powers, are empowered and required to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations for the prevention and control of such disease.


The department may declare any county or any area therein or any group of counties or areas therein where rabies exists to be an infected area and may provide for immunization and such other measures as shall be indicated for the prevention and control of the disease.

31-19-3. Licensing and regulation of animals by local authorities.

The governing authorities of each county and municipality are authorized and required, in the control of rabies, to require regulation or licensing of animals.


It shall be the duty of any person bitten by any animal reasonably suspected of being rabid immediately to notify the appropriate county board of health. It shall be the duty of the owner, custodian, or person having possession and knowledge of any animal which has bitten any person or animal or of any animal which exhibits any signs of rabies to notify the appropriate county board of health and to confine such animal in accordance with rules and regulations of the county board of health.
31-19-5. Inoculation of canines and felines against rabies.

The county boards of health are empowered and required to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations requiring canines and felines to be inoculated against rabies and to prescribe the intervals and means of inoculation, the fees to be paid in county sponsored clinics, that procedures be in compliance with the recommendations of the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians for identifying inoculated canines and felines, and all other procedures applicable thereto. As used in this chapter, the term "inoculation against rabies" means the administering by a licensed veterinarian of antirabies vaccine approved by the department.


31-19-7. County rabies control officer.

(a) The county board of health shall appoint a person who is knowledgeable of animals to be the county rabies control officer. It shall be the duty of the county rabies control officer to enforce this chapter and other laws which regulate the activities of dogs.

(b) The county governing authority of each county is authorized to levy a fee not to exceed 50 cents for each dog, such fee to be collected by the veterinarian administering the antirabies vaccine required by this chapter. This fee shall be in addition to that provided for in Code Section 31-19-5. If any county has no resident veterinarian, the out-of-county veterinarian administering the antirabies vaccine and collecting the fee provided for by this Code section shall forward to the treasurer of the county of the dog owner's residence the fee prescribed by that county's governing authority.

(c) The fees collected under this Code section shall be used to help in paying the salary of the county rabies control officer.


The governing authority of each county may devise and implement plans whereby this chapter, as amended, is administered jointly with one or more adjoining counties.


This chapter shall not apply to municipalities which already have a rabies control law unless and until such law is repealed.


Any person who violates any provision of this chapter or any rule or regulation adopted pursuant thereto shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.