

New Rabies Law Effective Feb. 13

As of February 13, 1987, Pennsylvanians who own or keep dogs and household cats over three months of age must have them vaccinated against rabies.

Vaccinations are mandated by the Rabies Prevention and Control in Domestic Animals and Wildlife Act, which was signed into law by Gov. Dick Thornburgh on Dec. 15, 1986.

Those who violate the law could be fined up to \$300. The following summary of the act is provided to help Pennsylvanians comply.

VACCINATIONS & CERTIFICATES: Rabies vaccinations are required for dogs and household cats over three months of age. Inoculations must be administered or supervised by a licensed veterinarian. For each animal vaccinated, the veterinarian must provide the animal's owner or keeper with a vaccination certificate and tag.

BOOSTER VACCINATIONS: Animals over one year of age must receive a booster vaccination one year after the original inoculation, then at least every three years thereafter. Animals older than one year must have boosters at least every three years after the original vaccination.

VACCINATION RECORDS: Information from rabies vaccination records cannot be used to license animals or to tax individuals owning animals.

KENNEL OWNERS: State licensed kennel owners may ad-

minister rabies vaccines to animals they own if they are certified as qualified to do so by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. Until they are certified, kennel owners must have their animals inoculated by or under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAW: Police, state dog wardens and municipal animal control officers are charged with enforcement. Those convicted of violating the law can be fined up to \$300 for each day they are in violation.

RABIES VACCINATION CLINICS: The Department of Agriculture will assist municipalities, civic groups and others in establishing clinics. It will provide technical advice and information about vaccine and veterinary services. It also will help publicize clinics scheduled. Clinic sponsors should contact the Department for assistance.

It should be noted that dogs and cats must be vaccinated, effective February 13, 1987, whether or not clinics are available to their owners. The inoculations can be obtained from licensed veterinarians as well as clinics.

Rabies threatens the lives of humans and it is spreading across Pennsylvania. In raccoons and skunks, the outbreak is an epidemic. Unvaccinated dogs and cats are a threat to spread the disease. They have frequent contact with humans and wild and

domestic animals.

Rabies is a virus disease most frequently transmitted through the bite of an infected animal. It also can be transmitted by contamination of open wounds, a flesh abrasion or scratch, or the eye with virus in saliva from a rabid animal.

Symptoms of rabies in animals vary from a quiet depressed state to a furious erratic behavior pattern. Changes in behavior and temperament are early symptoms.

If you are bitten by an animal, wash the wound thoroughly with plenty of soap and water. Contact a physician about medical treatment

If the biting animal is a domestic dog or cat, confine and isolate it. Contact a veterinarian about having the animal examined and for handling procedures.

Wild animals suspected of having rabies should be humanely killed without damaging the brain. A veterinarian can advise on procedures to follow in delivering the animal or its head to a qualified laboratory to determine if it is rabid. Wear plastic or rubber gloves to handle the animal.

Keep the head or carcass of the specimen in a sealed container and refrigerate with ice. Do not use dry ice and do not freeze it.

Pets exposed to a possibly rabid animal should be confirmed, isolated and handled as little as possible. Contact a veterinarian for advice.

In the event of a pet or human exposure to rabies, assistance can be obtained through the Department of Agriculture and Health, humane societies and local and state police. If a wild animal is involved, Game Commission representatives in your area should be contacted. The Department of Health has a toll-free number (1-800-692-7254) to receive calls about rabies exposure incidents.

Licensed Vet Must Give Vaccination

HARRISBURG - The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture recently warned that rabies vaccinations given to dogs and cats by their owners will not be valid under a new state law that mandates rabies inoculations as of February 13.

"Only inoculations administered or supervised by a licensed veterinarian will be acceptable under the law, whether the vaccination is given before or after February 13," noted Dr. Max A. Van Buskirk, Jr., director of the Bureau of Animal Industry.

"The only exception will be state licensed kennel owners who become certified by the Department to inoculate animals they

own," Van Buskirk said. "Inoculations they give before they are certified will not be valid.

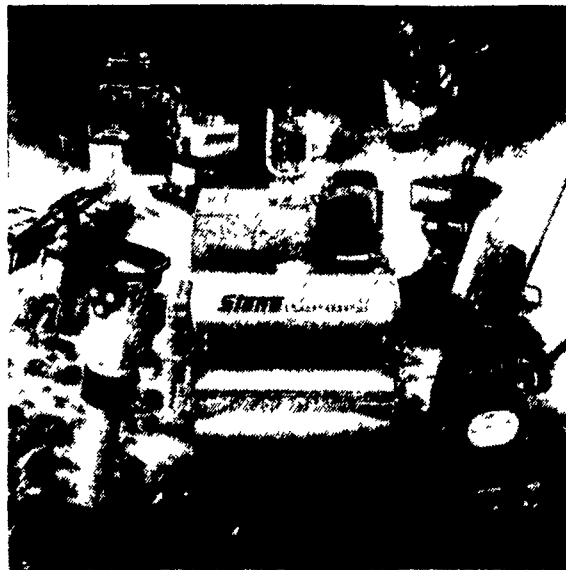
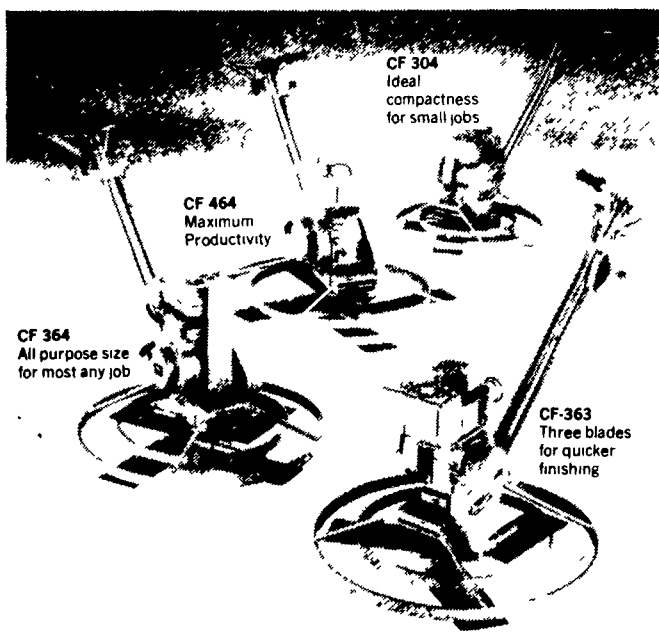
"We know from inquiries to the Department that some owners, including uncertified kennel owners, wrongly believe that inoculations they give their dogs and cats between now and February 13 will put them in compliance with the law," he added.

"Evidence of a valid vaccination will be the certificate that the new law requires veterinarians to issue to the owner of each animal vaccinated," Van Buskirk said.

The law applies to all dogs and household cats over three months of age. Cats covered by the law are those that spend any part of a day in a residence inhabited by a human. Owners convicted of violating the law can be fined up to \$300 for each day their animals remain unvaccinated.

To help Pennsylvanians understand and comply with the law, the department has published a free brochure about the law. It can be obtained by sending a postcard to Rabies Brochure, Department of Agriculture, 2301 N. Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110, or by calling 1-800-AG-PENNA.

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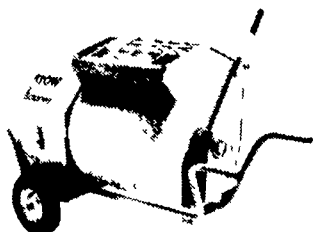


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