According to State Law, you are being required to quarantine your animal for 10 days. This law is intended to protect the injured person from any rabies risk.

My animal only scratched someone. Why do I have to quarantine?

Rabies is a viral infection transmitted in the saliva of an infected animal. Spread of rabies is usually through bite wounds but may occur through scratches. Scratches are considered a risk because dogs, cats or ferrets continually lick their paws, and therefore saliva may be present on the toenails of the animal and penetrate the skin of the victim.

My pet is healthy and doesn’t have rabies. Why do I have to quarantine?

You might not know if your pet has had contact with a rabid animal. You are not with your pet 24 hours a day. A contact could be, for instance, from a rabid bat in the middle of the night. Once bitten, the rabies virus makes its way to the brain of your pet and multiplies in the brain. You may not see any signs of rabies in your pet at this point, and it is unable to spread the virus.

Why is the quarantine 10 days?

As the rabies virus multiplies in the brain, it travels to the saliva of the animal. At this time your pet is able to spread the disease. Research has shown that once the rabies virus is in the saliva of your pet, the animal will be sick, show signs of rabies, or die within 10 days. Therefore if your animal remains entirely well for 10 days, the rabies virus was not in the saliva at the time of the bite or scratch. There would be no risk to the injured party.

Why must my pet be tied, kenneled, or kept indoors?

The confinement ensures that the animal can be readily observed for the 10 days. If the animal develops recognizable signs of rabies, it allows time to treat the bite victim for rabies exposure. This is why it is so important that a dog, cat, or ferret under quarantine be strictly confined at all times to ensure that it cannot run away or be injured.

My animal is vaccinated. Why do I have to quarantine?

There is no cure for rabies once a person has developed the symptoms. For this reason, even a vaccinated pet must go through quarantine. Although a fully-vaccinated dog, cat, or ferret is unlikely to become infected with rabies, rare cases have been reported.

My cat is indoors all the time. Why do I have to vaccinate?

Your cat could potentially be exposed by a bat in your home, or if your cat were to get loose, it may be exposed to rabies by another animal. Also, state law requires that dogs be vaccinated and many city ordinances require cats to be vaccinated. In the United States, rabid cats have outnumbered rabid dogs in 8 out of the last 10 years.

What will the veterinarian exam involve? What will the veterinarian look for?

There is no single symptom for rabies. Your veterinarian will look for many different signs. The animal may become unusually shy or unusually approachable. The pet may be sluggish, excitable, staggering, show weakness or paralysis, have a change in the sound of its voice, or be unable to eat or drink. The veterinarian may check the animal’s lymph nodes. A CHANGE IN “EXPECTED” BEHAVIOR IS THE MOST CONSISTENT SIGN OF RABIES. Your pet will not require lab work or X-rays.

IF YOUR ANIMAL IS HEALTHY AT THE END OF THE 10-DAY QUARANTINE, THERE IS NO RABIES RISK TO THE INJURED.

The 10-day confinement and observation period for dogs, cats, and ferrets 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, cat, or ferret in order to test its brain for the rabies virus.