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Date: 18 Aug 08  
To: Health Care Professionals  
From: Carl Williams, State Public Health Veterinarian  
Subject: Availability of Novartis Rabies Vaccine

On August 15th, the CDC has issued an update and new guidance regarding rabies vaccine, both for indications & for instructions to access available supplies. [www.cdc.gov/rabies/news/2008-08-15\\_RabVaxupdate.html](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/news/2008-08-15_RabVaxupdate.html).

Due to various production issues, Novartis Vaccines is now the only supplier for rabies vaccine (RabAvert). The high demand for rabies vaccine during the summer is outpacing any production capacity Novartis Vaccines has at this time; subsequently Novartis now requires that any & all health agencies call the state health rabies official first to obtain a confirmation code so that rabies vaccine can be released for rabies post exposure prophylaxis (PEP). Contact information for state rabies officials is listed at: <https://www.novartisvaccinesdirect.com/RPHOfficials.aspx>

The assessment & indications for PEP can be found in the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations on "Human Rabies Prevention--U.S. 2008." See: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr57e507a1.htm>. These guidelines are similar to those published in the 1999 edition of the ACIP rabies guidance and consistent with the N.C. Division of Public Health's publication "North Carolina Manual for Rabies Prevention & Animal Bite Management." [www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/vet/pdf/2007NCRabiesManual.pdf](http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/vet/pdf/2007NCRabiesManual.pdf).

The re-imposed requirement by Novartis has greatly increased the volume of calls to the Veterinary Public Health (VPH) program, the overwhelming majority coming from hospital-based pharmacies. Often times the information regarding the assessment & indications for PEP is incomplete as the pharmacy is given the responsibility of procuring vaccine, but with little background information regarding the circumstances of the bite incident. This is important information that must be presented to VPH in order to authorize release of rabies vaccine.

Information necessary to provide a risk assessment:

1. The circumstances concerning the bite incident
2. Characterization of the wound
3. Species of the biting animal
4. Disposition of the biting animal (captured, euthanized, available for testing, etc.)
5. Has the health department been notified of the bite incident (NCGS 130A-196 requires that any bite incident or potential exposure to rabies that is seen by a physician must be reported to the local health director within 24 hours).

It is encouraged that a health provider or medical extender call VPH about assessment and indications for PEP. In this way we can obtain all information needed to release vaccine. The VPH program is a 24/7 service and can be reached at 919-707-5900 or after hours at 919-733-3419 option 1.

There is no forecast about when the current procedure to procure rabies vaccine will be removed.

CW:cw



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Working for a healthier and safer North Carolina  
Everywhere. Everyday. Everybody.

