Trident Technical College

Veterinary Technology Program

Rabies Vaccination Policy

The AVMA – CVTEA, the Program's accrediting body, requires that all students entering the clinical portion (exposure to live animals) of an accredited Program be vaccinated against the Rabies virus or a comprehensive Rabies mitigation policy must be in place.

What is the Rabies Virus?

Rabies is a preventable viral disease most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The rabies virus infects the central nervous system of mammals, including humans, ultimately causing disease in the brain and death. The vast majority of rabies cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) each year occur in wild animals like bats, raccoons, skunks and foxes, although any mammal can get rabies.

For additional information about the rabies virus including state-wide disease prevalence data and current pre-exposure vaccination recommendations, please explore the following sites / links :

DHEC Links

Rabies | SCDHEC (Rabies in South Carolina)

Data, Reports on Rabies | SCDHEC

Low Cost Vaccination Options

Educational Resources

Flow Charts

Rabies Control Act

NASPHV Compendium for Rabies

CDC Links:

[ACIP Rabies Vaccination Guidance](#)

Could I be exposed to the Rabies virus as a student in the Program?

   Yes. The Program's curriculum exposes students to a variety of animals in different settings for hands-on clinical experience and, in many cases, students may come in contact with animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies or that have unknown vaccination histories.

How can I decrease my risks from possible exposure to the rabies virus as a student?

Pre-exposure vaccination, titers, and preventive measures

Rabies exposure is an occupational hazard for veterinary professionals, and preventive measures are necessary to protect veterinary teams.

Pre-exposure rabies vaccination (also known as pre-exposure prophylaxis or PrEP) is an important part of this protection, as is a rabies antibody titer check, when recommended. And protection doesn't stop here. PrEP doesn't replace good preventive practices, such as appropriate use of [personal protective equipment](#) when handling animals or lab specimens.

PrEP benefits and administration

PrEP doesn't eliminate the need for additional treatment after rabies exposure. What it does eliminate is the need for post-exposure rabies immunoglobulin administration. It also decreases the number of post-exposure doses of vaccine needed. Rabies PrEP also may provide some protection if post-exposure rabies treatment is delayed or if rabies exposure goes unrecognized.

VACCINATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) develops recommendations on vaccine use for the prevention of disease—including rabies—in U.S. human populations.

In May 2022, the ACIP redefined its categories for people at risk of rabies, and revised its [recommendations concerning rabies PrEP](#). Veterinarians, credentialed veterinary technicians, and veterinary assistants (including non-credentialed staff working as technicians) are now considered to be in risk category 3 of 5, and are recommended to get a primary PrEP series with **two doses of rabies vaccine, seven days apart**, to provide protection for up to three years. In addition, either of the following also is recommended:

- A one-time rabies antibody titer check between one and three years after the primary two-dose series, then a booster if the titer is less than 0.5 IU/mL

- A single booster between three weeks and three years after the first dose in the primary series was given

Although not specifically mentioned by ACIP, the same recommendations could be presumed to apply to other members of the veterinary team who have contact with animals, as well as veterinary students.

Vaccination may be performed with either the human diploid cell vaccine or the purified chick embryo cell vaccine, by intramuscular administration in the deltoid area of the arm. ***Failure to complete the primary two-dose PrEP series puts you at risk of incomplete protection if exposed to rabies.***

Am I required to receive the Pre-exposure Rabies Vaccination series in order to enroll in the Veterinary Technology Program?

YES, based on the recommendation of the CDC, and with the guidance of the American Veterinary Medical Association's Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities (AVMA-CVTEA), Trident Technical College's Veterinary Technology Program is requiring that all students receive the pre-exposure rabies vaccination series prior to the start of the VET 160 class which is offered in the Program's second (Spring) semester.

Failure to complete (and document) the pre-exposure rabies vaccination series by this timeline will result in the student being unable to participate in the clinical hands-on experiences with live animals resulting in their inability to progress further within the program.

As a student within the Program, will I receive any additional Rabies specific safety / awareness training before my exposure to / handling of live animals in the curriculum?

Yes, representatives of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's Rabies Program, including its state-wide director, will provide on-site in-person training to current Program students during their first Fall semester of enrollment prior to the use of live animals.

Topics will include:

1. Rabies as a Zoonotic Disease
2. Rabies Risk Assessment
3. Recognizing a Potential Rabies Suspect Animal
4. Best Preventive Practices (including appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when handling live animals or lab specimens).

How many injections will I need and how much will it cost?

Current recommendations for the pre-exposure (PrEP) Prophylaxis series call for two doses of Rabies vaccine administered seven days apart to provide protection for up to three years.

- The approximate cost for each vaccination is between $430 to $560 per dose resulting in an overall cost to the student of approximately $860 to $1,120
- Price for the vaccine may vary depending on vaccine administration location
- Costs such as a health exam, administrative fees etc may add to the overall cost of the vaccines

The Program and the College, through its Foundation, have been making significant efforts to help offset some of the costs associated with the vaccines. Such efforts include:

1. Continually working with area health providers to develop more cost effective and centralized vaccination options for Program students
2. Fundraising by the Student Veterinary Technology Club
3. Fundraising by the College's Foundation

These fundraising efforts have been successful and will remain ongoing.

Where can I go to receive the vaccines?

- If you currently have health insurance or a relationship with a doctor, we recommend starting here. Important things to clarify with your provider.
    - This is required for entry into the program
    - You are entering a high risk profession
    - This is considered preventative care
    - Provide the physician with this document showing the requirement for program entry

- Self- Pay options- (you can try for reimbursement from your insurance as well, but we recommend working with them first)
    - Walgreens -Students can request to receive the vaccine at a designated Walgreens location. You can also reach out to other locations.
    - Passport Health- 2154 N Center St Ste. A-104, North Charleston, SC 29406, (843) 225-5689
    - Passport Health- 260 W Coleman Blvd Ste. B, Mt Pleasant, SC 29464, (843) 225-5688
    - Prisma https://prismahealth.org/

What if I am already vaccinated?

- Students will need to provide documentation of previous vaccine administration to include, dates, location, Physician signature etc

- Depending on timing, a blood test to perform an antibody titer check may be necessary to ensure that the prior vaccines are still providing adequate protection.