

Rabies Vaccination Requirements

On February 21, 2013, the GMHA Board of Directors voted unanimously to require proof of rabies vaccination for all horses coming to GMHA.

Although the requirement is well communicated and published, GMHA event managers have received pushback from competitors and participants about GMHA's rabies requirement.

Some of the event managers have suggested that the GMHA requirement is over and above, and should be removed.

The purpose of this document is to understand the history behind GMHA's rabies rule and decide if it makes sense to ask the Board of Directors to revoke it.

Former Executive Director, Marty Hunt, remembers that the Vermont Exhibition Permit Protocol for Vermont Shows and Fairs came into effect in February 2013. Although rabies vaccines are not required as part of the Exhibition Protocol, a board member at the time, who is a Veterinarian licensed to practice in Vermont and New Hampshire, was a strong proponent of GMHA requiring proof of rabies vaccination for all horses coming onto the property. Of note, 67 animals in Vermont tested positive for rabies in 2012, up from 28 in 2011 (<http://www.healthvermont.gov/disease-control/zoonotic-diseases/rabies>). This uptick in confirmed cases may have contributed to GMHA's proactive vaccination rule.

Since many competitors and participants come from out of state, it is important to see what neighboring states are doing with regard to rabies vaccines for horses. Regulations and recommendations for neighboring states are not as easy to find as Vermont's, but below is a listing of the most readily available information on the World Wide Web:

State	Rabies Required or Recommended	Language	Source
CT	Required	***All cattle, horses and sheep must have a rabies vaccination given by a licensed veterinarian.	http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/inspection_regulation/2017/2017_CT_Fair_and_Show_Requirements_with_memorandum.pdf
MA	Required	Rabies – Required by Massachusetts Law	http://www.town.halifax.ma.us/Pages/HalifaxMA_Bcomm/Agriculture/HorseKeeping.pdf
ME	Recommended	The AAEP (American Association of Equine Practitioners) recommends that each horse receive the following “core” vaccines annually: Rabies	http://maineequineassociates.com/service/examinations/

NY	Recommended	There is no NYS law for Rabies vaccination for horses but it's strongly recommended. Horses attending NYS fair and county fairs must be vaccinated for Rabies (county laws). Other additional exhibitions, shows, racetracks may also require Rabies vaccination. Call the event to verify. We do not honor or recognize "rabies titers."	https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AI/import_export/Horses.pdf
RI	Required	Rabies Certificates: All dogs, cats, sheep, cattle, horses and ferrets that are on public exhibition must be currently vaccinated against rabies. A current and valid official rabies vaccination certificate is the only acceptable proof of rabies vaccination. Rules and Regulations Governing the Prevention, Control, and Suppression of Rabies Within the State of Rhode Island which can be seen at http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/agric/rabies16.pdf is the reference document regarding rabies vaccination in Rhode Island.	http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/agric/fairshow.pdf
VT	Recommended	Livestock animals, including horses, are not required by law to be vaccinated for rabies, although it is strongly recommended due to the high prevalence of rabies disease in Vermont's skunk, fox, raccoon, and bat populations and the potential exposure of livestock to these wildlife species.	http://agriculture.vermont.gov/animal_health/animal_movement/companion_animals/rabies_rules

The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) recommends that the rabies vaccine be a core vaccine for all equids. While the group concedes that the incidence of rabies in horses is low, the disease is invariably fatal and has considerable public health significance (<https://aaep.org/guidelines/vaccination-guidelines/core-vaccination-guidelines/rabies>).

While strongly recommended, a conversation with Kristin Haas, the State Veterinarian, confirms that horses are not required by Vermont law to receive rabies vaccinations. She commends GMHA for requiring proof of rabies vaccination as the prevalence of rabies is a danger to livestock. She also states that rabies vaccines are inexpensive and there are not a lot of reported adverse reactions. She considers GMHA's requirement to be good protection for the horses and GMHA.

Based on the information from Vermont's State Veterinarian, the recommendations of the AAEP, and the recommendations and requirements of neighboring states, GMHA's rabies vaccination rule is reasonable, and does not present an undue burden to horse owners. At this time, GMHA will continue to require proof of rabies vaccinations.