



Rabies Control Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: April 4, 2012

Board Member Attendees: Scott Marshall, DVM (DEM, Chairman); C.H. Hannafin, DVM, (AVMA Veterinarian); Charles Brown, (DEM Designee); David Holden (Humane Organization); Kevin Breene (Livestock Farmer); Utpala Bandy, MD (DOH Designee)

Non-Board Attendees: Steve Hall, (Chief, RI Division of Law Enforcement); Henry Leibovitz, (RI State Health Laboratory); Michael Merchant, (Glocester ACO); Laura Wistow-Menard

Meeting called to order at 9:30 AM by Dr. Marshall followed by roll call of all in attendance.

Acceptance of meeting minutes of the RCB for February 2, 2012 meeting Dave Holden, motioned to accept the minutes. Motion seconded by Dr. Christopher Hannafin

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Variance Petition for Laura Wistow-Menard

Laura Wistow-Menard claims that her dog Rose has had life time of issues and now problems with the ears due to vaccinations. Her dog has been under the continuous care of her veterinarian who has recommended cessation of vaccinations due to these medical issues. Ms Wistow-Menard stated that they live on a private road, have a fenced in yard, and the dog resides with her husband, eight year old son, one other dog and one cat. Officer Mike Merchant's concern was that rabies is in the area. Dr. Marshall said precautions would have to be put in place if a variance was granted. Ms Wistow-Menard provided extensive detailed veterinary records to the Rabies Control Board for review in support of her claim.

Dr. Hannafin asked if biopsies were done and vasculitis was confirmed. Dr Hannafin then went on to state that if the board approves the variance the standard is that the animal must have periodic physical exams. He also stated that safeguards such as mandatory yearly appointments should be necessary. Dave Holden stated vet visits should be documented and the ACO should be notified. Dr Marshall said that the board should clearly state to Ms Wistow-Menard all of the stipulations attached with a variance and ask her if she understood them and agreed to abide by them. Ms Wistow-Menard agreed to all the required stipulations. Officer Mike Merchant stated that the dog was currently unlicensed at this time and that licensure is required. Ms Wistow-Menard acknowledged that fact and agreed to license the dog.

Motion to issue variance to Ms Wistow-Menard for Rose by Dave Holden. Second by Dr Marshall. All members voted unanimously to issue variance.

B. Variance Petition for Melissa Sue Young & Carol Young

Melissa Sue Young and Carol Young also petitioned the Rabies Control Board for a variance from compulsory rabies vaccination. They cited that their dog Pupcake had a severe allergic reaction requiring emergency hospitalization following rabies vaccination. The Youngs provided extensive detailed veterinary records to the Rabies Control Board in support of their claim.

Dr. Hannifin questioned if reactions were caused from just rabies or possibly the other vaccines that were given at the same visit. It was determined from the records that rabies vaccine was the only vaccine given. Dr Hannafin suggested that blood titers be drawn periodically as an aid in determining whether there are sufficient levels of protective antibodies for diseases other than rabies, but that protective titers for rabies have not been validated. Dr. Hannifin also suggested that these issues be revisited in 3 years as the risk could change and that in fact, the dog is considered currently vaccinated as a result of receiving the vaccine that presumably caused the reaction. The board then discussed management of the hypothetical case of how an animal such as this would be managed if an exposure occurred between the vaccine that caused a reaction and the expiration of that vaccine (while the animal was considered currently vaccinated) since protocols require booster vaccination after exposure even for dogs that are currently vaccinated. The Board decided that if exposure occurs in this period there would be a six-month quarantine unless the owner opted to have a booster administered as is protocol. The owner will have to secure the animal, notify the veterinarian, Rabies Control Board and animal control officer. Dr. Hannafin noted that variances are on a case by case basis. Variances are open-ended and subject to all protocols

Motion to issue variance to Melissa Sue Young and Carol Young by Dr. Chris Hannifin. Second by Dave Holden. All members voted unanimously to issue variance.

OLD BUSINESS: Old business was discussed after New Business to allow variance hearings to occur ahead of regular board business.

DISCUSSION ON BATS CONTINUED:

Discussion on whether it is humane to hold captured bats in a refrigerator until they can be euthanized for rabies testing. Mr Brown stated that temperature and humidity conditions in a refrigerator are similar to the conditions found in hibernacula and that under these conditions bats rapidly enter a state of torpor so that their metabolism slows, oxygen requirement is greatly reduced, as is requirements for food and water. Dr Leibovitz commented that the isoflurane chamber that has been instituted by the State Health Lab has been working well to humanely euthanize bats. Dr. Bandy and Chief Hall expressed her concern that the bat may escape or cause further exposure if any attempt was made to “repackage” bats that were submitted in containers that were not see-through. The board agreed that all containers should be see-through, but those that were not should have small air holes made and be clearly marked “Live Bat” inside. Chief Hall stated that his officers would submit any bats that they captured in clear containers, and mark those containers appropriately if a live bat was contained. He also stated that Environmental Police would not repackage bats that were already in a container when they collected them, but that they would mark the container appropriately and make air holes. Environmental Police would then submit the bat to the SHL or place in the refrigerator if the lab was not open at the time the bat was submitted. The board agreed that this was an acceptable policy for submission of bats collected by the Division of Law Enforcement.

Dr Leibovitz remarked that a municipal Animal Control Officer submitted a bat to the SHL in a container with cotton balls soaked in isoflurane. Dr Marshall said that he had authorized the submission after conversation with the ACO revealed that she had access to a veterinarian that could perform the euthanasia by this method. Dr Leibovitz suggested drafting a letter regarding submission of live bats and note to use a plastic container marked isoflurane if the bat is euthanized by this method and the isoflurane remains in the container with the bat and that refrigeration is acceptable. Dr Marshall stated that it would be a rare occurrence for an ACO to have access to a veterinarian that would euthanize a bat, but in the future any ACO seeking guidance will be advised to clearly mark the container if isoflurane is contained within. ACOs will be given the same advice regarding holding bats in a refrigerator until submitted.

Submission of specimens to lab for testing.

Charles Brown explained that simply seeing a grounded bat during the day does not mean that there was an exposure or that the bat is necessarily diseased. With no known contact there is no reason to test bats that fall into this category. Anyone attempting to move or remove the bat should do so in a manner that does not result in a potential exposure.

Dave Holden said that finding someone to decapitate animals for submission to the SHL was an issue. Dr. Marshall suggested training someone from each municipality or bringing specimens to veterinarians. Bats may be submitted whole, but other animals must be decapitated.

Dr. Hannafin suggested looking into how much it would cost to pay a mobile vet or training an employee of a veterinarian. He also discussed a screw down guillotine but commented that it must be used in an appropriate environment with proper protective clothing. Discussion was made on requesting a vet to decapitate it and store animal until it can be tested. This would give less chance of access to exposure to the ACOs. Dr. Marshall suggests sending a letter to all ACOs but Dr. Hannafin said it was not warranted. No further action was authorized by the board on this issue.

Charles Brown said he sent out 49 letters to licensed nuisance wildlife control companies asking them if they would be interested in responding to bat calls on an emergency basis. Only four companies stated that they would. The list of these companies to be forwarded to the Division of Law Enforcement for referral in situations where there is a bat in the house, but that there is no exposure based on protocol criteria of exposure assessment. Dr. Marshall suggested updating the list every year. Charlie Brown also said depending on cost of these companies that homeowners may not call them.

NEXT MEETING is set tentatively for June 27th, 2012 @ 9:30 AM – Conference Room 370A. Meeting was set under the assumption that there may be petitions for variance that would have been submitted. All members agreed to this date with the assumption that the meeting may be cancelled if there are no variance requests received.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:45 a.m. Motion to adjourn by Dr. Marshall, and seconded by Dave Holden. All voted in favor.