

## **Information about Required Rabies Immunizations** **Program of Veterinary Technology**

**Statement:** All students enrolled in the Program of Veterinary Technology must be fully immunized with a pre-exposure rabies prophylactic vaccine series and tetanus toxoid and must carry health insurance during matriculation at Manor College.

### **Why are rabies and tetanus immunizations, and health insurance required before matriculation?**

#### **Rabies:**

According to the AVMA, rabies is an almost invariably fatal disease for animals and humans and is a serious public health problem. It is considered an occupational hazard in the veterinary profession and preventative measures are necessary to protect veterinary professionals. According to the CDC, veterinarians and veterinary support staff are in risk category 3 and should receive pre-exposure rabies vaccination.

Pre-exposure rabies vaccination does not eliminate the need for additional treatment after a rabies exposure, but it removes the need for post-exposure rabies immunoglobulin administration and decreases the number of post-exposure doses of vaccine needed. Pre-exposure prophylaxis also may provide protection if post-exposure rabies treatment is delayed or if rabies exposure is unrecognized.

The active antibody response develops in approximately 7–10 days, and detectable rabies virus neutralizing antibodies generally persist for several years. The duration of protection varies, so regular titers are necessary to assess the need for a booster vaccination. According to the ACIP guidelines: "Although virus neutralizing antibody levels might not definitively determine a person's susceptibility or protection from a rabies virus exposure, titers in persons at risk for exposure are used to monitor the relative rabies immune status over time. To ensure the presence of a primed immune response over time among persons at higher than normal risk for exposure, titers should be checked periodically, with booster doses administered only as needed."

(<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/one-health/rabies-pre-exposure-vaccination-and-titers-veterinarians>)

There are two types of pre-exposure rabies vaccinations, the human diploid cell vaccine (HDCV) and the purified chick embryo cell vaccine (PCEC). They are administered intramuscularly in the deltoid area of the arm in a schedule of two injections, with one injection per day on day 0, and again on day 7. Then, it is recommended to obtain a one-time titer check after 1 year or obtain a 1-dose booster 3 weeks to 3 years later. (source: <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/hcp/clinical-care/pre-exposure-prophylaxis.html>)

The Program's curriculum includes many laboratories in which students will be working directly with animals. Since all mammals can carry rabies, particularly those with unknown immunization histories such as strays that come from shelters, and the fact

the Program uses shelter animals in many of its courses, all students enrolled in the Veterinary Technology Program at Manor College must complete the full Rabies pre-exposure series.

The pre-exposure rabies immunization series is usually **NOT** covered by personal health insurance. The cost of the series is about \$900 - \$1200, but this can increase without notice. All students must receive the full series and should allow 2-3 weeks for its completion and maximum effectiveness.

More information about Rabies and about cases of rabid animals in Pennsylvania can be found at these websites:

<https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html>

[PA Department of Agriculture Rabies information](#)

#### Tetanus & Health Insurance:

Students can be exposed to viral and bacterial infections from bite wounds and other contact with animals, therefore all students in the Program must be immunized against tetanus and must carry health insurance during the duration of their matriculation.

Students are responsible for their own health care costs including the rabies immunization series. Most health insurance policies do not cover pre-exposure rabies immunizations.

#### **How do I prove that I have received the rabies and tetanus immunizations?**

Completion of the IHIR form is required as evidence that rabies and tetanus immunizations have been received. Students will not be permitted to take VT197 Animal Handling & Husbandry or any other course that requires hands-on training with animals until this form is completed and returned to the Veterinary Technology Office.

#### **Where can I go to get the immunizations?**

Pre-exposure rabies prophylactic immunizations can be administered by a family physician, or by a physician based at some drug store chains such as Walgreens.

#### **Returning a Signed Form:**

**Be sure to take the IHIR form with you to your appointments and have it signed each time you go.** When completed, xerox or photograph the form for your records and mail the original to:

**Maureen Coyle  
Program of Veterinary Technology,  
Manor College  
700 Fox Chase Road  
Jenkintown, PA 19046**