
"To improve the health of our communities by identifying sustainable solutions to community health issues, developing partnerships for implementation of strategies, and demonstrating our success through measurement of outcomes."

Rabies Vaccine in Short Supply in U.S.

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There are two FDA-approved rabies vaccines licensed for both rabies pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis use in the U.S.: RabAvert® by Novartis and IMOVAX® Rabies by Sanofi Pasteur. There has been a significant interruption in the supply of rabies vaccine (see below for an explanation of the vaccine shortage) and it is unclear at this time when the vaccine availability will improve.

Vaccine is currently available only when a password is used.

- Sanofi Pasteur requires that a password accompany every vaccine order, which is patient-specific, to assure judicious vaccine use. Information on appropriate rabies vaccine use is found in the 'Human rabies prevention- United States, 2008 Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' (see reference information below).
- **How to acquire a password (passwords change regularly):**
 1. Healthcare providers (or pharmacists knowledgeable of the patient-animal exposure history) must contact a district or state epidemiologist to participate in a short verbal risk assessment before the password is made available. The risk assessment is used to determine opportunities for vaccine deferment:

For Example:

- **Has an animal been captured for a 10 day observation period?; or**
- **Is an animal available for rabies testing (with test completion within 10 days of the incident)?**

Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis is considered a medical urgency, not a medical emergency. If the answer is 'yes' to either of these two questions, use of rabies post-exposure prophylaxis may be deferred until the results of the animal observation or rabies test is known.

If the animal is not available for observation or testing, or there is a significant delay in observation or testing, and a rabies exposure is believed to have occurred the password will be given.

2. Once you receive the pass code, the pharmacist will contact Sanofi Pasteur at 1-800-VACCINE to obtain the vaccine.

Why is there an interruption in supply?

- Starting in June 2007, Sanofi Pasteur began renovating its IMOVAX® Rabies vaccine production facility in France to maintain compliance with the most current requirements from FDA and the French regulatory body. Prior to these renovations, Sanofi Pasteur established an inventory based on historical levels of sales and projected market demand. The facility is scheduled to be approved and operational by mid-to-late 2009. Until the facility is operational, Sanofi Pasteur has a finite amount of IMOVAX® Rabies vaccine.
- After the renovations began, Novartis, the other supplier of rabies vaccine for the United States (RabAvert®), was unable to meet projected rabies vaccine supplies.
- Since early 2008, Novartis has been supplying its rabies vaccine, RabAvert®, for post-exposure use only. Consequently, Sanofi Pasteur has been supplying nearly all of the market for rabies vaccine. The increase in demand for IMOVAX® is outpacing the company's historical levels of supply. As of August 29, 2008, Sanofi Pasteur in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has agreed to ship IMOVAX® Rabies rabies vaccine only for post-exposure prophylaxis and only through a pass code-mediated process.
- Until further notice, Novartis Vaccines will no longer be shipping supplies of RabAvert® at all. Novartis will release RabAvert® only for emergency consideration, on a case-by-case basis, when an adverse event to alternative vaccination has occurred or is a possibility. Novartis vaccine access must be mediated via the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Office of Epidemiology and Food Protection.

Other recommendations and resources:

- At every opportunity, general rabies awareness and prevention messages should be emphasized to avoid exposure (e.g., avoid wildlife contact, vaccinate pets/livestock, capture/observe/test exposing animal, etc.).
- If it can be safely done, rabies-prone animals that potentially exposed a person to rabies, should be captured for observation (if a cat, dog, or ferret) or testing (all other mammals).
- Promote vaccination of all dogs, cats, and ferrets against rabies.
- To discuss rabies epidemiology in Idaho, contact your district or state epidemiology office.
- To learn more about rabies, including access to reference materials, access <http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov> and search for Rabies under the A-Z index.

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