



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ACT MEMO

2005 Wisconsin Act 240
[2005 Assembly Bill 527]

**Exemptions From Rabies
Vaccination for Dogs**

Current law requires the owner of a dog to have the dog vaccinated against rabies. The dog owner must obtain a dog license annually from the city, village, or town in which the dog is kept. The owner must provide proof of rabies vaccination in order to obtain the dog license. Failure to have a dog vaccinated against rabies subjects the owner to a forfeiture of between \$50 and \$100. Prior statutes had only a single exemption from this requirement. The prior exception to the vaccination requirement is for a dog that is kept only for educational or scientific purposes.

Act 240 creates a new exemption that authorizes a city, village, or town to exempt the owner of a dog from the requirement to have the dog vaccinated against rabies. To qualify for this exemption, the owner must provide the city, village, or town with a letter from a veterinarian stating that vaccination of the dog against rabies is inadvisable because of the dog's reaction to a previous vaccination, the dog's physical condition, or a regimen of therapy that the dog is undergoing. The city, village, or town is authorized but not required to provide the exemption. (Under current statutes, a city, village, or town may have a more restrictive program than the state rabies vaccination requirements.) Upon obtaining the approval of the city, village, or town, the owner may obtain a dog license for a dog that is exempt from the vaccination requirement, but the owner must provide a new letter from a veterinarian for each year that the owner seeks an exemption.

If a dog is thought to have bitten a person, is suspected of having rabies, or has been in contact with a rabid animal, it must be quarantined. The quarantine requirements for a dog that has not been vaccinated against rabies are substantially more stringent than the quarantine requirements for a vaccinated dog. If the dog owner has obtained an exemption from the city, village, or town for having a vaccination, the more stringent quarantine requirements apply to the dog.

Effective Date: Act 240 takes effect on April 13, 2006.

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This memo provides a brief description of the Act. For more detailed information, consult the text of the law and related legislative documents at the Legislature's Web site at: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/>.