

## **DOG LICENSING Q'S & A'S**

As April 1st quickly approaches, many town clerks are engaged in the unwieldy task of dog licensing. Over the years, the State Veterinarian's Office has received many questions via telephone and fielded a multitude of others while visiting town clerks throughout Vermont. In an effort to reduce the understandable confusion, we offer the following information to clarify a few points.

### ***What is the purpose of a kennel permit? 20 V.S.A. § 3681.***

A kennel permit is issued by the town for the purpose of establishing that a resident is keeping domestic pets or wolf-hybrids for reasons other than for his or her own use, i.e. for sale or breeding purposes. Bear in mind the kennel permit applies to wolf-hybrids and domestic pets, which include dogs, cats and ferrets as defined in Title 20 Chapter 193 § 3541(3).

Inevitably, we hear each year from a disenchanting breeder who would like to obtain a kennel permit only to be told that the town ordinance does not allow kennels either for boarding or for construction of kennel facilities. Please do not mistake the intent of the kennel permit. The kennel permit has no relationship to any zoning ordinance pertaining to kennels for boarding or for construction of kennel facilities. The kennel permit also has no relationship to dog licensing.

### ***What is the dog licensing schedule? 20 V.S.A. § 3581.***

Dog licensing is an annual event. Dogs more than six months of age may be licensed any time after January 1 of a calendar year, but must be licensed no later than April 1 of the same year in order to avoid an additional 50% fee assessment. If a dog reaches six months of age after April 1, the owner has 30 days to apply for a license; after October 1, the fee is reduced by half.

### ***What is the purpose of the special license? 20 V.S.A. § 3583.***

A point of clarification. Domestic pets, as you know, includes dogs, cats and ferrets. Unless your town requires cats and ferrets to be licensed, this provision only refers to dogs and wolf-hybrids. Think of a "special license" as a discount incentive for breeders who agree to maintain their breeding animals within "proper enclosures," defined as a locked fence or structure of sufficient height and sufficient depth into the ground to prevent the entry of young children and to prevent the animal from escaping. The special license is not intended to provide a reduced license fee to any individual possessing more than three breeding animals. When a special license is requested, consider the following:

1. All animals registered under the special license must be maintained within a proper enclosure. Many breeders, especially hound owners, have questioned the requirement to maintain their dogs within a "proper enclosure." The word enclosure is not taken in a literal sense but permits the removal of dogs under supervision from the fenced area for necessary training, as in the case of hunting dogs.
2. If the holder of a special license also maintains spayed and neutered animals they must be licensed individually at the \$4.00 rate and are not to be included on the special license.

### ***What is a current rabies vaccination?***

Changes to the Vermont Statutes with regards to current rabies vaccination requirements for licensing are being considered, to help eliminate much of the confusion generated by the current definition and address some of the concerns with vaccination. At least for now, we must continue to follow current requirements.

A great deal of confusion arises because of different interpretations of what the expiration date is. There are two expiration dates.

1. One is the expiration date for the duration of protection that the vaccine has been approved for by the USDA. For example, an approved three-year vaccine is considered to have a duration of protection that will expire three years from the date the vaccine was given. This is the expiration date that many veterinarians are accustomed to writing on the rabies vaccination certificate.
2. The other expiration date is the date the vaccine is no longer considered current as defined in the Vermont statutes with regards to dog licensing. Even though a vaccine may be approved as a three-year vaccine, for the purposes of licensing an adult dog, the vaccine is only considered current if it was administered within the previous two years.

The easiest way to decide if a rabies vaccination is current for the purposes of licensing a dog is to consider the following: for dogs over two years of age, the vaccination must have been given within the previous 24 months; for dogs under two years of age, the vaccination must have been given within the previous 12 months. Forget about expiration dates. Pay attention only to when the vaccination was given. Is it within 24 months for dogs older than two years, or within 12 months for dogs younger than two years? If not, they should be revaccinated before renewing their license. This is frustrating for owners who are not aware that vaccinations are no longer considered current for licensing even though it is within the expiration date that the vaccine is approved for. Veterinarians are not always good about explaining this difference to their clients. Some towns have been printing the date to renew vaccinations right on the license.

If you have further questions please call the State Veterinarian at 802/828-2421. Dog licenses, kennel permits and special license forms may be obtained through: Vermont Correctional Industries, RR 1, Box 680, Windsor, VT 05089, tel. 802/674-6724. Please forward the duplicate copies of the kennel permit and special licenses issued in your town to: Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Animal Health Section, 116 State Street, Drawer 20, Montpelier, VT 05620-2901.

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