

# MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM

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*Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
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(Formerly Bureau of Health)  
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**\*\*ADVISORY – Important Information\*\***

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**2008PHADV018**

**TO:** Veterinarians; Hospitals; Infection Control Practitioners; Public Health-Required

**FROM:** Dora Anne Mills, M.D., M.P.H., Public Health Director

**SUBJECT:** Human Rabies Vaccine Supply Update

**DATE:** October 24, 2008

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Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)  
(Formerly Bureau of Health)

## **Human Rabies Vaccine Supply Update, October 23, 2008**

### **Summary:**

There is currently a rabies vaccine supply shortage in the United States. Novartis (produces RabAvert®) now has adequate supply to deliver post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) vaccine upon request and without restriction. Sanofi Pasteur (IMOVAX®) has PEP vaccine available on a limited basis with a password requirement. It is anticipated that a vaccine supply shortage will continue through 2009.

During this vaccine shortage, it has become clear that PEP is frequently given inappropriately. Every attempt should be made to submit suspect rabid animals to HETL for rabies testing, or for domestic animals, the local animal control officer should be contacted, and the animal placed in 10-day quarantine prior to initiating any PEP. Further, when indicated, PEP needs to be administered per ACIP national recommendations: Rabies immune globulin should be injected at the time of the first dose of rabies vaccine. Maine CDC epidemiologists are available 24/7 at 1-800-821-5821 to respond to concerns and inquiries regarding rabies prophylaxis. Human rabies post-exposure prophylaxis is a reportable condition in Maine; health care providers can fax reports to 287-8186.

### **Recommendations Regarding Post-Exposure Prophylaxis:**

#### Novartis (RabAvert®)

- Effective immediately, Novartis is able to deliver RabAvert® vaccine for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), without supply restrictions. No password is currently required to place an order for RabAvert®; however, providers should follow the current ACIP recommendations for rabies PEP and consult with local health officials.
- RabAvert is not currently available for pre-exposure prophylaxis and cannot be pre-ordered.
- The Novartis product identification number has changed to 63851-501-01.
- Questions can be directed to Novartis customer service at 1-800-244-7668.

#### Sanofi Pasteur (Imovax®)

- Imovax (Sanofi Pasteur) is available for PEP on a per-patient ordering basis with a password requirement. To obtain IMOVAX® rabies vaccine you must first contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) by calling 1-800-821-5821 so that a risk-assessment can be conducted for the suspected exposure.
- If the Maine CDC determines that rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is indicated, they will provide you with a passcode to place on the Sanofi Pasteur Rabies Post-Exposure Form. The form must be filled out in its entirety, including the required physician's signature and passcode.
- Please contact Sanofi Pasteur at 1-800-VACCINE to obtain the required form.

Persons with possible rabies exposure should be evaluated as soon as possible by a health-care provider. Since PEP is an urgent medical issue but not an emergency, it can be delayed until animal rabies testing or quarantine is completed. Persons requiring PEP should initiate and complete a vaccine series with one vaccine product.

### **Recommendations Regarding Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis:**

No pre-exposure prophylaxis requests are being filled by either manufacturer at this time.

**For More Information:** Contact Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821 for PEP reporting, consultation, or for more information. The federal CDC continues to provide frequent updates on vaccine supplies at: [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies). The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) human rabies prevention recommendations outline animal exposures associated with the risk of rabies: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5703a1.htm>.