



# STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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May 21, 2008

**TO:** Healthcare Providers, Hospitals, Veterinarians, Animal Care Providers and Local Health Departments

**FROM:** NYSDOH Bureau of Communicable Disease Control, Zoonoses Program

**HEALTH ADVISORY: RABIES VACCINE RESTRICTED FOR  
POSTEXPOSURE USE ONLY**

**Please distribute immediately to the Emergency Department; Departments of Infectious Diseases, Internal Medicine, Family Practice, and Pediatrics; Director of Nursing, Medical Director, all patient care areas; Veterinarians, Veterinary Technicians and all animal health support staff.**

On Monday May 19 2008, Sanofi Pasteur announced that, effective immediately, they will no longer allow purchase of IMOVAX Rabies (human rabies vaccine) for use in primary and booster pre-exposure prophylactic immunization (PreEP). A letter from the manufacturer explaining this change was released to clinicians on May, 19, 2008 (attachment 1). Sanofi Pasteur is taking this action to maintain sufficient supply of rabies vaccines in the U.S. market for use in postexposure prophylaxis. Thus, IMOVAX Rabies will temporarily only be available for treating patients who have had documented rabies exposures (i.e., postexposure prophylaxis--PEP).

In addition, Novartis, the other supplier of rabies vaccine in the US, currently has limited amounts of their rabies vaccine, RabAvert. Since early 2008, Novartis has restricted availability of their vaccine to use only for PEP. It is expected that additional RabAvert will be available by approximately July 2008. It is hoped that the demand for PreEP vaccine supplies will be met at this time.

**This means that effective immediately, no additional vaccine can be purchased at this time for PreEP.** PreEP should be delayed until vaccine is available. Booster vaccination for persons with inadequate serum antibody titers should also be delayed until vaccine supplies become available for PreEP. Additional vaccine is expected to be available again approximately in July 2008. For people who have already begun the 3-dose PreEP series, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends locating and using existing stocks of vaccine to

complete the series. Discussions among federal, state, and local public health personnel are ongoing to review additional strategies to handle PreEP needs.

Sanofi Pasteur will continue to supply their vaccine to healthcare providers who are treating patients who have had documented rabies exposures. State law requires that providers consult with their local health department to ensure appropriate use of PEP. Persons at increased risk for rabies exposure should take appropriate precautions to avoid rabies exposure (<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/exposure/>). General rabies awareness and prevention messages should be promoted (<http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/rabies/>).

### **Reasons for the Interruption in Vaccine 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 the US Food and Drug Administration 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, was unable to meet rabies vaccine demand. 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.

For answers to other questions regarding the human rabies vaccine supply and human rabies prophylaxis, please see attachment 2.

### **Additional Information**

NYSDOH Rabies Website: [www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/rabies/](http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/rabies/)

NYSDOH Wadsworth Center Rabies Laboratory Website: [www.wadsworth.org/rabies/](http://www.wadsworth.org/rabies/)

CDC Rabies Website: [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies)

Human Rabies Prevention, 2008 – Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP): [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies)

National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) Compendium of Animal Rabies Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr5702.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr5702.pdf)

Please contact the NYSDOH Zoonoses Program at 518-474-3186 if you have any questions or concerns regarding this situation. We will provide additional updates as more information becomes available.

May 2008

Dear Health-care Provider:

Effective May 19, 2008, IMOVAX<sup>®</sup> Rabies, Rabies Vaccine became available for post-exposure use only. Sanofi Pasteur, in consultation with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), is supplying IMOVAX Rabies vaccine for post-exposure purposes only. This is in response to limited supplies of vaccine. There are two factors contributing to the current shortage.

Starting in June 2007, sanofi pasteur began renovating its IMOVAX Rabies vaccine production facility in France to maintain compliance with the most current requirements of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and French regulatory body, Agence Française de Sécurité Sanitaire des Produits de Santé (AFSSAPS). These renovations began after obtaining full agreement from these agencies to proceed. To allow for continued supply of IMOVAX Rabies vaccine during the renovation period, sanofi pasteur established inventory based on historical levels of sales and projected market demand. The facility is on schedule 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 US, became unable to consistently supply rabies vaccine. Since early 2008, Novartis has been supplying its rabies vaccine, RabAvert<sup>®</sup>, for post-exposure use only. Consequently, sanofi pasteur has been supplying nearly all of the nation's rabies vaccine. Clearly, this increased demand for IMOVAX Rabies vaccine is outpacing the company's historical levels.

As a result, sanofi pasteur is supplying IMOVAX Rabies vaccine for post-exposure use only.

Clinicians should seek assistance from state public health officials for evaluating exposures or determining the need for post-exposure management in situations that are not routine.

Since rabies is virtually always fatal, it is of utmost importance that we do everything possible to have rabies vaccine available when an exposure occurs.

(Over)

We apologize for any inconvenience this may create, but it is a necessary step in keeping with our commitment to protect those who have been subjected to this dangerous virus. Health-care providers requiring rabies vaccine for post-exposure administration, should contact sanofi pasteur by calling 1-800-VACCINE (1-800-822-2463).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chad Hoover". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "H".

Chad Hoover  
Vice President, Marketing and Sales, US

## **RABIES BIOLOGICAL SUPPLY**

### **Questions and Answers**

#### **How long will vaccine for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PreEP) not be available?**

We are unsure how long rabies PreEP will not be available. We are hopeful that supplies will begin to improve in approximately July 2008.

#### **What do I do for someone who is in the middle of a PreEP regimen?**

PreEP should begin only if adequate supply of vaccine is available. If it has already begun, it would be better to complete the PreEP regimen; however, additional stocks may not be released for this purpose. Completion of the regimen will have to be done using previously purchased stocks. If this is not possible, the PreEP should be discontinued, and the person considered as non-vaccinated. If indicated, the PreEP course in such persons should be resumed at the point it was stopped (not started over) when adequate vaccine supply for PreEP is available. If unable to follow ACIP schedule on doses, a serum antibody titer should be obtained 2-4 weeks after the last dose.

#### **Will vaccine be available for persons that had PreEP and now have a low titer?**

No. No additional stocks of rabies vaccine will be released for PreEP usage. Persons at increased risk for rabies exposure should take appropriate precautions to avoid rabies exposure. Previously vaccinated persons in the "Frequent" risk category (see ACIP Human Rabies Prevention Recommendations, 2008) should continue to have their rabies titer checked every two years as recommended. Booster vaccination for persons with inadequate titers will be delayed until vaccine supplies become available for PreEP. Individuals who are concerned about their titer should request a virus neutralization antibody test according to the ACIP schedule from the NYSDOH Wadsworth Center's Rabies Laboratory.

#### **Does this change affect all risk groups for PreEP or just the lower risk group (i.e., infrequent or travelers)?**

This change affects all risk groups. Individuals who are traveling should consider avoiding travel to high rabies risk areas unless otherwise necessary. Travelers should be aware of anti-rabies postexposure prophylaxis options in that country in case exposure is likely.

#### **How does this affect local health departments that purchase or provide rabies vaccine?**

Local health departments that purchase vaccine directly will only be able to purchase them for postexposure (PEP) usage at the current time.

## General Information about Rabies Prophylaxis

### Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP):

- **Obtaining the exposing animal to determine rabies status by confinement or testing is critical to avoid unnecessary PEP.**
- PEP is indicated for persons exposed to a rabid or suspect rabid animal, if rabies is not ruled out by confinement or testing.
- Exposures include animal bites or mucous membrane contamination with infectious tissue or fluids such as saliva. Exposures also include reasonable probability exposures to bats. Blood, feces and urine do not contain the virus and are not infectious. For more information on types of exposures, see the 2008 ACIP Guidelines: [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies) and NYSDOH guidelines: [www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/rabies/](http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/rabies/).
- PEP should begin as soon as possible after an exposure. Administration of rabies PEP is a medical urgency, not a medical emergency. There have been no vaccine failures in the United States (i.e., someone who developed rabies after vaccination) when PEP was given promptly and appropriately after an exposure.
- Physicians should evaluate each possible exposure to rabies and are required in New York State to consult with local public health officials regarding the need for rabies PEP.

### Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) regimen:

- In the United States, PEP for previously unvaccinated persons consists of a regimen of one dose of rabies immune globulin and five doses of rabies vaccine over a 28-day period.
- The immune globulin and first dose of vaccine should be given as soon as possible after exposure.
- Additional doses of rabies vaccine should be given on days 3, 7, 14, and 28 after the first vaccination.
- Current vaccines are relatively painless and are given in the arm, like a flu or tetanus vaccine.

### Pre-exposure vaccination (PreEP) series:

- *When available again for this purpose*, PreEP should be offered to persons in high-risk groups, such as rabies diagnostic workers, veterinarians, and animal handlers that work in rabies enzootic areas.
- *When available again for this purpose*, PreEP also should be considered for other persons whose activities bring them into frequent contact with rabies virus or potentially rabid bats, raccoons, skunks, cats, dogs, or other species at risk for having rabies.
- The PreEP series consists of three doses of rabies vaccine administered on days 0, 7 and 21 or 28.