Recently, the NRC revisited the issue of release criteria for cats treated with I-131. The regulatory requirements for release criteria are found in 10 CFR 20.1302. In effect, this rule states that a licensee must demonstrate that no member of the public will receive greater than the annual public dose limit (100 mrem) from contact with the cat once it is released. It is up to the licensee to choose dose rate limits and other quantitative release criteria. However, these criteria must be supported by a suitable model for calculating that doses to members of the public do not exceed the limits in 10 CFR 20.

Through discussions with the different NRC Regions and several Agreement States, NRC staff discovered substantial inconsistencies in the specific release criteria of licensees that treat cats with radioiodine. The inconsistencies between licensees were noted in three key areas:

I. The maximum allowed exposure rate measured at a defined distance from a cat before it is released

II. The minimum number of days the cat must be held prior to release to assure a substantial percentage of the unbound iodine is excreted. (This holding period minimizes the potential for iodine contamination in the home of the cat's owner).

III. The level of detail of the instructions to pet owners (i.e., specific time and distance values, other specific items)

Due to these inconsistencies, NMSS held a public meeting with one of its licensee's in July of 2002 to discuss acceptable release criteria. Currently, the NRC is incorporating the discussion of this meeting into standard guidance.

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