



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Thomas Farley, MD, MPH, *Commissioner*

2012 Veterinary Alert # 4

Raccoon from Brooklyn Tests Positive for Rabies

October 24, 2012

- **On October 23, 2012, a dead raccoon collected from Prospect Park in Brooklyn tested positive for rabies at the New York City Public Health Laboratory.**
- **This is only the third raccoon with rabies that has ever been found in Brooklyn since raccoon rabies arrived in NYC in 1992. The previous two cases were both reported in 2010.**
- **Encourage your clients to ensure their pets are up-to-date on rabies vaccination**

Please share with your colleagues in Veterinary Medicine and your staff

Dear Veterinary Colleagues,

On October 23rd, 2012, the Public Health Laboratory of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) reported a positive rabies test in a raccoon collected from Prospect Park in Brooklyn. The raccoon was found dead, and there were no known human exposures to the raccoon. This is the third report of a rabid raccoon in Brooklyn since rabies first appeared in NYC in 1992; the previous two raccoons were found in 2010. Other animals testing positive for rabies in Brooklyn have included 5 bats and 1 cat. The cat (2001) was found on the tracks of a subway line and thought to have been transported into Brooklyn.

Enhanced surveillance is currently being conducted in Prospect and Fort Greene Parks by testing all sick, injured, and dead raccoons and results will help determine if this is an isolated event or may be representative of the movement of raccoon rabies and terrestrial transmission into Brooklyn. As of October 23, 2012, 8 animals have tested positive for rabies this year in NYC: 4 raccoons from Staten Island, 2 bats from Manhattan, 1 raccoon from the Bronx, and now 1 raccoon from Brooklyn.

Rabies is most commonly spread to domestic animals by attacks from wild animals, especially raccoons.

DOHMH reminds veterinarians to consider rabies as part of the differential diagnosis for any animal that has been exposed to a potentially rabid wild or feral animal (particularly a rabies vector species such as raccoons, skunks and bats) and/or is presenting with a progressive neurological illness.

The DOHMH also encourages veterinarians to ensure that their clients' pets are up-to-date on rabies vaccinations. Maintaining vaccination against rabies is required by law for all dogs and cats, four months of age and older, in New York City. Any unvaccinated dog or cat that may have been exposed to a rabid or potentially rabid animal is required to enter into six-month isolation in an approved veterinary facility or be euthanized. If a pet is up-to-date with its rabies vaccine but potentially exposed to a rabid animal, a booster rabies vaccine should be given immediately, and the owner should be instructed to confine and observe the animal for the next 45 days, at home.

Any pet dog or cat that has bitten or otherwise potentially exposed a person to rabies is required to be confined and observed by the owner (in most instances) for 10 days. If the dog or cat is not currently vaccinated against rabies, vaccination should not occur until after completion of the 10 day observation period. Animal bites are reportable to the DOHMH Office of Veterinary Public Health Services (VPHS), Animal Bite Unit (ABU) at 212-676-2483. For questions about whether persons should receive rabies PEP, contact a health care provider or the DOHMH Bureau of Communicable Disease (BCD) at 347-396-2600 during business hours (Outside of business hours, please call the Poison Control Center at 212-POISONS or 212-764-7667).

Additional information about rabies is available on the DOHMH website at www.nyc.gov/health/rabies, including summary data for New York City.

What All Veterinarians Can Do

- Educate clients to:
 - Avoid contact with wild animals.
 - Not feed wildlife.
 - Make sure their dog or cat is up-to-date on its rabies vaccinations.
 - Feed their pets indoors.
 - Avoid leaving their pets outdoors unattended.
 - Avoid trying to separate animals that are fighting.
 - Contact their veterinarian if their pet has been in contact with an animal that might be rabid.
 - Seal any enclosure that may give wildlife access to a residence.
 - Keep trash indoors or in rodent-resistant waste containers with locking lids.
- Report all suspected animal rabies cases to the DOHMH VPHS.
- Contact us for more information
 - Veterinary Public Health Services 212-676-2483
 - Bureau of Communicable Disease 347-396-2600
 - After Hours: NYC Poison Control Center 212-764-7667

As always, we greatly appreciate your partnership and cooperation.

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