



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Thomas Farley, MD, MPH

2013 Veterinary Alert # 1: 2012 Summary of Animal Rabies in New York City

- **In 2012, 13 animals from New York City tested positive for rabies**
- **Raccoon and bat rabies have been found in all five boroughs since 1992**
- **The last dog to test positive for rabies in NYC was in 1954**

Please share with your colleagues in Veterinary Medicine and your staff

February 19, 2013

Dear Veterinary Colleagues,

We are writing to share the 2012 year summary of rabies testing data from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Public Health Laboratory (PHL) Rabies Laboratory. The most up-to-date information regarding rabies can be found on our website at

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/diseases/cdrab.shtml> . As in the past, urgent matters regarding rabies will be brought to your immediate attention via fax or email.

Between January 1 and December 31, 2012, 13 animals collected from four of the five New York City boroughs tested positive for rabies at the DOHMH PHL Rabies Laboratory: 6 raccoons from Staten Island, 2 raccoons and 1 opossum from the Bronx, 2 bats from Manhattan and 1 raccoon and 1 bat from Brooklyn.

Throughout the US, different variants of the rabies virus exist and are maintained in their respective vectors, following geographically distinct patterns. Those vectors include raccoons, skunks, bats, foxes and coyotes. The raccoon variant is present along the Atlantic Coast and the bat variant throughout the US except Hawaii. Since the arrival of raccoon rabies in New York City in 1992, it has persisted enzootically and raccoons remain the primary reservoir species in the City (**Table 1**). Occasionally, rabid raccoons transmit the virus to other wild animals, usually skunks. Historically, most rabid animals have been identified in the Bronx and Staten Island, with isolated reports of rabid raccoons in Queens and Brooklyn. The one exception was the large epizootic of raccoon rabies that occurred in Central Park from 2009 to 2011.

A much smaller number of rabid bats have been found in all 5 boroughs and it is important to note that bats are the primary vector of human rabies infections in the US. Dogs and cats are also susceptible to rabies; however, vaccination and animal control have significantly reduced the numbers of rabid dogs and cats both in NYC and throughout the US. No rabid dogs have been reported in NYC since 1954, although dogs with the raccoon variant have been reported in neighboring areas outside NYC. Since 1992, only 13 rabid cats have been identified in NYC; among these, 11 were strays. Nassau County has been free of raccoon rabies since 2007 and Suffolk County since 2009.

Rodents (e.g., squirrels, rats, mice) and members of the rabbit family are not considered to be vectors of rabies. The one exception is the groundhog, which has tested positive for rabies in NYC (one in 2007 on Staten Island) and surrounding areas. Rabies infections in domestic rodents or rabbits should be considered only in unusual

circumstances, such as when the animal has a history of a bite wound and has been housed in an outdoor hutch or when a rabies vector species (e.g., raccoon) has been observed in the vicinity.

Please review the annual summary, along with comparative data from the previous three years. For questions regarding the summary, general questions regarding rabies or for consultation regarding rabies titer testing or rabies vaccinations for you or your staff, please contact Dr. Sally Slavinski at 347-396-2672. For acute issues during regular business hours regarding possible rabies exposures please use the main number for the Bureau of Communicable Disease (347-396-2600), and after hours call the NYC Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 or 1-212-POISONS.

This information is made available through the collaborative efforts of the DOHMH Public Health Laboratory and the Office of Veterinary Public Health Services, along with the Bureau of Communicable Disease. As always, we greatly appreciate your partnership and cooperation.

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TABLE 1. Total Laboratory-Confirmed Rabid Animals in NYC, 1992-2012

Animal Species	Bronx	Queens	Manhattan	Staten Island	Brooklyn	Total Positive	Total Tested	% Positive
Raccoon	184	10	145	127	3	469	6291	7.5
Skunk	41	0	0	2	0	43	273	15.8
Bat	13	4	10	5	6	38	895	4.3
Dog	0	0	0	0	0	0	1862	0
Cat	3	0	2*	7	1	13	2929	0.4
Other**	3	1	0	3	0	7	1974	0.4
Total	244	15	157	144	10	570	14224	4.0

*One cat from Columbia County and one cat from New Jersey were tested in NYC.

**Other includes 2 coyotes (1999 and 2010, Bronx), 4 opossums (1994 and 1992, Staten Island, 2010 Queens, 2011 Bronx), and 1 groundhog (2007, Staten Island).

TABLE 2. Annual Summary of Animals Rabies Testing Performed by NYC Rabies Laboratory, 2012

SPECIES	BRONX		KINGS - BROOKLYN		NEW YORK - MANHATTAN		QUEENS		RICHMOND - STATEN ISLAND		TOTAL	
	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive
Bat	2	0	5	1	20	2	6	0	4	0	37	3
Cat	6	0	21	0	19	0	19	0	12	0	77	0
Coyote	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Groundhog	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
Dog	7	0	5	0	8	0	3	0	3	0	26	0
Fox	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Opossum	11	1	10	0	0	0	7	0	7	0	35	1
Rabbit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Raccoon	24	2	48	1	31	0	67	0	24	6	194	9
Skunk	7	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	11	0
Other	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	0
Grand Total	58	3	90	2	82	2	105	0	51	6	386	13

- Two specimens were unfit for testing.

**Table 3. Animals Rabies Testing Performed by NYC Rabies Laboratory in 2012
Compared to Previous Years by Animal Species**

ANIMAL	2009		2010		2011		2012	
	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive
Bat	39	1	38	3	20	3	37	3
Cat	116	0	87	1	88	1	77	0
Beaver	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Dog	38	0	51	0	28	0	26	0
Ferret	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fox	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Groundhog	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
Coyote	0	0	2	1	1	0	1	0
Monkey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Muskrat	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Opossum	70	0	21	1	26	0	35	1
Rabbit	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Raccoon	292	28	339	138	144	9	194	9
Skunk	15	0	11	1	5	0	11	0
Squirrel	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Other	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Grand Total	573	29	551	145	315	13	386	13

**Table 4. Animals Rabies Testing Performed by NYC Rabies Laboratory in 2012
Compared to Previous Years by County**

COUNTY	2009		2010		2011		2012	
	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive
BRONX	138	15	81	18	61	9	58	3
BROOKLYN	65	0	58	2	54	0	90	2
MANHATTAN	117	12	267	123	79	3	82	2
QUEENS	204	1	107	2	71	0	105	0
STATEN ISLAND	48	1	38	0	46	0	51	6
OUTSIDE NYC	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	0
Grand Total	573	29	551	145	315	13	386	13