



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF

HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Mary Bassett, MD, MPH *Commissioner*

2014 Veterinary Alert # 1: 2013 Summary of Animal Rabies in New York City

- **In 2013, 56 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 7, 2014

Dear Veterinary Colleagues,

We are writing to share the 2013 summary of rabies testing data from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). 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, 2013, 56 animals collected from four of the five New York City boroughs tested positive for rabies at the DOHMH: 44 raccoons, 2 skunks, 1 cat, 1 bat and 1 opossum from Staten Island, 2 skunks and 1 bat from the Bronx, 2 bats from Manhattan and 2 raccoons from Brooklyn. No rabid animals were reported from Queens for the third year in a row. Staten Island reported more rabid raccoons in 2013 than any other year since surveillance began in 1992.

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. 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 14 rabid cats have been identified in NYC; among these, 12 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 issues regarding rabies or other public health related issues call the provider access line (PAL) at 1-866-692-3641. For specific questions regarding the summary, general questions regarding rabies, or for consultation regarding rabies titer testing, rabies exposures or rabies vaccinations for you or your staff, please contact Dr. Sally Slavinski at 347-396-2672. To report an animal bite or for more information about pets that have been bitten, please contact Veterinary Public Health Services at 646-632-6604 or 646-632-6074.

As always, we greatly appreciate your partnership and cooperation.

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Table 1. Total Laboratory-Confirmed Rabid Animals Tested in NYC, 1992-2013

SPECIES	BRONX	BROOKLYN	MANHATTAN	QUEENS	STATEN ISLAND	TOTAL POSITIVE	TOTAL TESTED	% POSITIVE
Raccoon	184	5	145	10	171	515	6492	7.9
Skunk	43	0	0	0	4	47	293	16.0
Bat	14	6	12	4	6	42	938	4.5
Dog	0	0	0	0	0	0	1892	0
Cat	3	1	2*	0	8	14	2930	0.5
Other**	3	0	0	1	4	8	2057	0.4
Total	247	12	159	15	193	626	14602	4.3

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

**Other includes 2 coyotes (1999 and 2010, Bronx), 5 opossums (1992, 1994, 2013 Staten Island, 2010 Queens, 2011 Bronx), and 1 groundhog (2007, Staten Island).

Table 2. 2013 Summary of NYC Animal Rabies Testing Performed by NYC Rabies Laboratory

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	5	1*	5	0	20	2	7	0	6	1	43	4
Cat	13	0	19	0	19	0	12	0	26	1	89	1
Dog	6	0	9	0	4	0	8	0	3	0	30	0
Groundhog	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0
Opossum	17	0	12	0	2	0	28	0	17	1	76	1
Raccoon	46	0	35	2	19	0	33	0	68	44	201	46
Skunk	14	2	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	2	20	4
Other**	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	5	0
Grand Total	102	3	82	2	68	2	89	0	125	49	466	56

*Bat tested at NYS Wadsworth Rabies Laboratory

*Other animals = 1 gopher, 3 squirrels, 1 muskrat

**Table 3. Animal Rabies Testing Performed by NYC Rabies Laboratory in 2013
Compared to Previous Years by Species**

ANIMAL	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive
Bat	38	3	20	3	37	3	43	4
Cat	87	1	88	1	77	0	89	1
Beaver	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dog	51	0	28	0	26	0	30	0
Fox	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Groundhog	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	0
Coyote	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Muskrat	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Opossum	21	1	26	0	35	1	76	1
Rabbit	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Raccoon	339	138	144	9	194	9	201	46
Skunk	11	1	5	0	11	0	20	4
Squirrel	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0
Other	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Grand Total</i>	551	145	315	13	387	13	466	56

**Table 4. Animal Rabies Testing Performed by NYC Rabies Laboratory in 2013
Compared to Previous Years by County**

COUNTY	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive	# tested	# positive
BRONX	81	18	61	9	58	3	102	3
BROOKLYN	58	2	54	0	90	2	82	2
MANHATTAN	267	123	79	3	82	2	68	2
QUEENS	107	2	71	0	106	0	89	0
STATEN ISLAND	38	0	46	0	51	6	125	49
<i>Grand Total</i>	551	145	315	13	387	13	466	56