



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH *Commissioner*

## 2014 Veterinary Alert # 3 Feral Cats Exposed to Rabid Raccoon in Brooklyn August 20, 2014

- A raccoon that attacked a litter of feral cats in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn on Aug. 15<sup>th</sup> tested positive for rabies
- Veterinarians should ensure that their clients' pets are up-to-date for rabies vaccination and educate pet owners regarding rabies prevention.
- Veterinarians should consider rabies in the differential diagnosis for any patient with a history of exposure to a potentially rabid wild or feral animal, and/or if presenting with progressive neurologic disease.
- In 2014, a total of 10 animals to date have tested positive for rabies, including 3 raccoons in Brooklyn
  - For current information on rabies and animals testing positive for rabies in NYC visit [www.nyc.gov/health/rabies](http://www.nyc.gov/health/rabies)

*Please share with your colleagues in Veterinary Medicine and your staff*

August 20, 2014

Dear Veterinary Colleagues,

On August 15, 2014 a raccoon found attacking a feral cat and her litter of kittens behind a store on the 7800 block of 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Bensonhurst neighborhood of Brooklyn tested positive for rabies on August 19<sup>th</sup> at the New York City Public Health Laboratory (PHL). The rabid raccoon may have also exposed other adult feral cats and a second litter of kittens from a colony that were seen and fed in the area. There were no human exposures to the rabid raccoon. Animal Care and Control is in the process of trapping the rest of the feral cat colony from this location as they are considered at high risk for rabies infection. Flyers will also be posted to alert people in the area to avoid contact with raccoons and stray cats. Owners are advised to keep their cats indoors and dogs on a leash.

To date in 2014, 10 animals have tested positive for rabies in NYC (see Table 1), including 3 raccoons from Brooklyn. Since 1992 when raccoon rabies first appeared in NYC, there have been 12 cats that have tested positive for rabies. Raccoon rabies was first detected in Brooklyn in 2010 and a total of 8 rabid raccoons (0-3 per year) have been reported from the borough. There has not been a rabid dog reported in NYC in over 50 years.

**Rabies is most commonly spread to domestic animals by attacks from wild animals, especially raccoons.** This is a reminder to consider rabies as part of the differential diagnosis for any animal presenting with a progressive neurological illness, particularly if the animal is a stray or if there is a history in which the animal was exposed to a potentially rabid wild or feral animal (particularly a rabies vector species such as raccoons, skunks and bats).

### Rabies Vaccination for Dogs and Cats

Maintaining vaccination against rabies is required for all dogs and cats in New York City. **Any unvaccinated dog or cat that may have been exposed to a rabid animal is required to either be euthanized or be quarantined for six months in an approved facility under daily observation.** If a pet is up-to-date with its rabies vaccine but potentially exposed to a rabid animal, a booster vaccine should be given immediately, and the owner should be

instructed to confine and observe the animal for 45 days in the owner’s home. For questions pertaining to rabies exposure in pets, please contact the Health Department’s Veterinary Public Health Services (VPHS) at 646-632-6604 during business hours.

Any healthy 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 animal is not currently vaccinated against rabies, vaccination should not occur until after the completion of the 10 day observation period. Animal bites are reportable to the Health Department’s Veterinary Public Health Services Animal Bite Unit at 646-632-6074 during business hours (outside of business hours, please call the Poison Control Center at 212-POISONS or 212-764-7667).

**Additional Information**

Additional information about rabies is available on the Health Department website at <http://www.nyc.gov/health/rabies> including summary data for New York City. The Health Department also recently revised a poster containing information and algorithms on the management of pets exposed to rabies and pets that have bitten a human at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/zoo/zoo-vet-poster.pdf>.

**What All Veterinarians Can Do**

- Educate clients to:
  - Avoid contact with wild animals and stray animals.
  - Make sure their dog or cat is up-to-date on its rabies vaccinations.
  - Avoid leaving their pets outdoors unattended and feed them indoors.
  - Avoid trying to separate animals that are fighting.
  - Contact their veterinarian if their pet has been in contact with a raccoon, skunk, bat or any animal that might be rabid.
- Report all suspected animal rabies cases to the DOHMH VPHS 646-632-6604.
- Contact us for more information
  - Veterinary Public Health Services           646-632-6604
  - 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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**Table 1. Laboratory-Confirmed Rabid Animals in New York City, 2014\***

<b>Animal Species</b>	<b>Bronx</b>	<b>Brooklyn</b>	<b>Manhattan</b>	<b>Queens</b>	<b>Staten Island</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Raccoon</b>	0	3	0	0	6	9
<b>Skunk</b>	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Bat</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Cat</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>

\*As of August 20, 2014