



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

2010 Veterinary Alert # 2

Raccoon from Brooklyn Tests Positive for Rabies

February 18th, 2010

- **On February 12, 2010, a raccoon collected from the Boerum Hill neighborhood in Brooklyn, tested positive for rabies at the Public Health Laboratory.**
 - **The raccoon reportedly interacted with a dog through an opening in a fence.**
 - **The dog was currently vaccinated against rabies and was given a booster shot. It is under confinement at the owner's home for a 45 day period.**
 - **There were no known human exposures to the raccoon.**
- **This is the first ever rabid raccoon identified in Brooklyn since raccoon rabies arrived in NYC in 1992.**

Please share with your colleagues in Veterinary Medicine and your staff

Dear Veterinary Colleagues,

On February 12th, 2010, 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 Brooklyn. The raccoon was captured for rabies testing following a report from a resident of the Boerum Hill neighborhood who saw the animal interacting with his dog through a fence in their backyard. The dog was currently vaccinated against rabies, given a booster rabies vaccine by a veterinarian and is under 45 day confinement at the owner's home. There were no known human exposures to the raccoon. This is the first ever report of a rabid raccoon from Brooklyn since raccoon rabies first appeared in NYC in 1992. Rabies surveillance in NYC began in 1992, and prior to this rabid raccoon, 5 bats and 1 cat tested positive for rabies in Brooklyn. The cat (2001) was found on the tracks of a subway line and thought to have been transported into Brooklyn. Enhanced surveillance in the area during the months ahead will help determine if this is an isolated event or may represent the movement of raccoon rabies and terrestrial transmission into Brooklyn. Rabies in New York City is most common in the Bronx, Staten Island, and now Manhattan. As of February 16th, 2010, 41 animals have tested positive for rabies this year in NYC; 40 raccoons in Manhattan and 1 raccoon from Brooklyn.

Rabies is most commonly spread to domestic animals by attacks from wild animals. 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 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 for all dogs and cats 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 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.

Any pet dog or cat that has bitten or scratched a person 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. Animal bites are reportable to the DOHMH Veterinary Public Health Services (VPHS) Animal Bite Unit 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 212-788-9830 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 <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cd/cdrab.shtml> including summary data for New York City,

What All Veterinarians Can Do

- Educate clients to:
 - Avoid contact with wild animals.
 - Make sure their dog or cat is up-to-date on its rabies vaccinations.
 - Feed 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.
- 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 212-788-9830
 - After Hours: NYC Poison Control Center 212-764-7667

As always, we greatly appreciate your partnership and cooperation.

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