



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Thomas Farley, MD, MPH, *Commissioner*

2013 Veterinary Alert #5 Raccoon from Brooklyn Tests Positive for Rabies October 28, 2013

- On October 22, 2013, a raccoon collected from the Sea Gate area of Brooklyn tested positive for rabies at the New York City Public Health Laboratory.
- This is only the fourth raccoon with rabies that has ever been found in Brooklyn since raccoon rabies arrived in NYC in 1992. It is the first evidence suggesting rabies activity may be present in southern Brooklyn.
- 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 22, 2013, 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 the Sea Gate area of Brooklyn. The raccoon was tested after it was attacked and killed by a dog. The dog was not vaccinated against rabies leaving the owner with one of two options; either euthanize the dog or place the dog in 6 month isolation at a veterinary facility. There were no known human exposures to the raccoon. This is the fourth report of a rabid raccoon in Brooklyn since rabies first appeared in NYC in 1992. It is the first evidence suggesting rabies activity may be present in southern Brooklyn. The three raccoons collected in 2010 (2) and 2012 (1) were from central Brooklyn (Prospect Park and Boerum Hill). Other animals testing positive for rabies in Brooklyn have included 6 bats and 1 cat. The cat (2001) was found on the tracks of a subway line and thought to have been transported into Brooklyn.

Continued surveillance 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 22, 2013, 49 animals have tested positive for rabies this year in NYC: 40 raccoons, 1 bat and 2 skunks from Staten Island, 2 bats from Manhattan, 1 bat and 2 skunks from the Bronx, and now 1 raccoon from Brooklyn.

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 of exposure 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 NYC. **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 DOHMH 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 DOHMH 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 DOHMH website at <http://www.nyc.gov/health/rabies>, including summary data for New York City. DOHMH has also recently published a guide to human rabies prevention, available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/chi/chi27-5.pdf>, as well as 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-2010.pdf>.

Nuisance raccoons should be handled by a licensed nuisance wildlife control operator. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is responsible for regulating these private businesses to properly handle and remove nuisance wildlife. A list of currently licensed nuisance wildlife control operators can be viewed online at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/81548.html#2>.

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 Veterinary Public Health Services at 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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