



2019 Veterinary Alert #4: Rabid Cat in the Bronx

- A stray, short-haired brown tabby cat with white markings tested positive for rabies. It was found Monday, April 29th near Needham and Grace Avenues in the Bronx.
 - This is the third cat from the Bronx to test positive for rabies since 2017.
- 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.
- For current information on rabies and animals testing positive for rabies in NYC, visit www.nyc.gov/health/rabies.

Please share with your colleagues in Veterinary Medicine and your staff

May 7, 2019

Dear Veterinary Colleagues,

On Monday April 29th, a stray, short-haired brown tabby cat with white markings was captured by NYPD near Needham and Grace Avenues in the Bronx after it attacked and bit a child on the ankle. The cat, described as an intact 5 year old male, tested positive for rabies at the NYC Public Health Laboratory. The cat was reported to have attacked a dog that was being walked by its owner nearby. The Health Department is actively trying to identify the dog and the dog owner to ensure it receives appropriate care. Two additional persons were exposed while the cat was being handled. All three persons are receiving rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). Flyers were posted in the neighborhood to help identify any additional bite victims.

This is the 18th cat to test positive for rabies in NYC since 1992, the year the Health Department began animal rabies surveillance; and the 7th cat from the Bronx. Cats with rabies are of particular concern because people are more likely to interact with them than with wild animals. There has not been a rabid dog reported in NYC in over 55 years. To date in 2019, 10 animals have tested positive for rabies; 5 raccoons from Manhattan, 3 raccoons from Staten Island, and 1 raccoon and 1 cat from Bronx.

Rabies is most commonly spread to domestic animals by attacks from wild animals, especially raccoons. Remember to consider rabies as part of the differential diagnosis for any animal presenting with a progressive neurological illness, 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 by law for all dogs and cats in New York City. **Any dog or cat exposed to a rabid animal, but that has never been rabies vaccinated, is required to either be euthanized or isolated for up to six months in a facility and manner prescribed by the Health Department under daily veterinary observation.** For any pet that has received rabies vaccine administer a booster vaccine immediately, notify the Health Department for further guidance. Owners of pets that were current on their rabies vaccine will be instructed to confine and observe the animal for 45 days in the owner's home. Pets that are overdue on their rabies vaccination will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

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 dog or cat remains healthy, it could not have been shedding virus at the time of the bite, and rabies PEP for the bite victim is not indicated. If the animal becomes ill, it must be evaluated by a veterinarian and the Health Department to determine if the illness is compatible with rabies. If the animal is not currently vaccinated against rabies, do not vaccinate until after the completion of the 10-day observation period. Report animal bites to the Health Department's Veterinary Public Health Services Animal Bite Unit at 646-364-1799 during business hours (outside of business hours, call the Poison Control Center at 212-POISONS or 212-764-7667).

Additional information about rabies, including NYC summary data and the brochure 'Rabies: Protecting Your Pet' is available on the Health Department website at <http://www.nyc.gov/health/rabies>. Call 311 to order copies of the brochure in English or Spanish.

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 animal bites and suspect animal rabies cases to the Health Department:

- VPHS Animal Bite Unit (ABU) 646-364-1799
- Outside business hours, call Poison Control Center: 212-POISONS (212-764-7667)

Questions? Contact the NYC Health Department:

- For questions on rabies exposures in pets, animal bites, and other animal-related issues
 - Veterinary Public Health Services (VPHS) 646-364-1783
- For questions on rabies exposures in people, PEP, and other human-related rabies issues
 - Bureau of Communicable Disease 347-396-2600
 - After Hours: NYC Poison Control Center 212-764-7667

Management guidelines for dogs and cats with exposure to a rabies vector species or rabid animal

- Never vaccinated
 - Euthanize or isolate in veterinary facility for up to 6 months at owner's expense
- Currently vaccinated
 - Immediately give booster vaccine. Confine and observe in owner's home for 45 days
- Not currently vaccinated
 - Managed on case by case basis

Management guidelines for healthy dogs and cats that have bitten a person

- Confine and observe dog or cat for 10 days
 - If animal not currently vaccinated, do not vaccinate until end of 10-day observation period
 - If remains healthy, rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) not indicated for bite victim
 - If becomes ill, must be evaluated by veterinarian and the Health Department

As always, we greatly appreciate your partnership and cooperation.

Sally Slavinski, DVM, MPH, DACVPM

Sally Slavinski, DVM, MPH, DACVPM
Zoonotic and Vector Borne Disease
Bureau of Communicable Disease
347-396-2672

Asha Abdool, MPH

Asha Abdool, MPH
Zoonotic and Vector Borne Disease
Bureau of Communicable Disease
347-396-2615

Norma S. Torres

Norma S. Torres, Director
Veterinary Public Health Services
Division of Environmental Health
646-364-1765