



Pat Quinn, Governor
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Local Health Departments, Regional Offices of Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois Department of Public Health Rabies Laboratories, Illinois Department of Agriculture Rabies Laboratories, Illinois Department of Agriculture Animal Welfare, Illinois Department of Natural Resources

FROM: Connie Austin, D.V.M., M.P.H., Ph.D.
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DATE: May 31, 2013

SUBJECT: Animal Rabies Surveillance for 2012

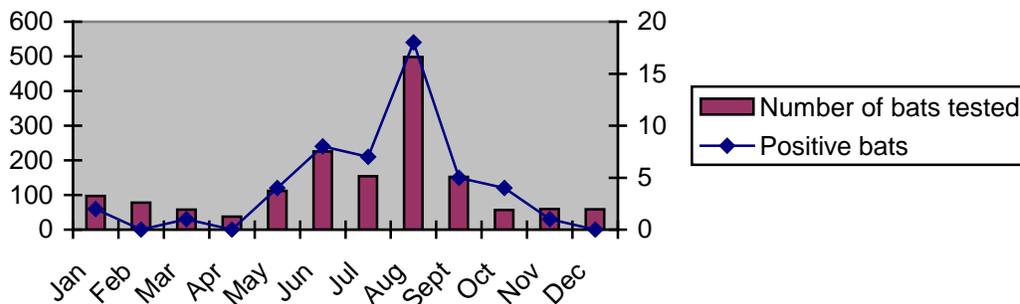
In 2012, a total of 4,419 animals were submitted for rabies testing to the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) diagnostic laboratories. There were 50 animal brains not suitable for testing. Of the 4,369 animals tested, 63 were fluorescent antibody-positive for rabies. All positive animals were bats (Figure 1). Animals testing positive for rabies from 2003 to 2012 are listed in Table 1. In 2012, the most frequently tested animals were bats (1,704), dogs (1,453), cats (708), skunks (187), raccoons (161) and squirrels (46).

Table 1. Rabies test positive animals by species and year in Illinois, 2002-2011

Species	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Bat	24	50	43	46	113	103	83	117	50	63
Cat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cattle	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Dog	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fox	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skunk	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Raccoon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Horse	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	24	51	51	46	113	103	83	117	51	63

Geographic location of bats testing positive for rabies is shown in Figure 1. The majority, 1,704 (63 percent) of testing occurred from June to September when bats are very active and likely to come in contact with humans or pets, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Number of all bats and positive bats tested in Illinois by month for 2012



SPECIMEN SUBMISSION

Animal brains should be submitted for rabies testing under the following conditions:

- A mammal that has bitten a domestic animal or a person and is not eligible for a confinement period. (Note: rabbits and small rodents are not recommended for rabies testing due to their low risk of rabies).
- An animal that exhibits signs suggestive of rabies. For large animals with neurologic disease, such as horses and cattle, brains should be removed from the skull before arriving at the IDPH laboratories.
- Skunks for rabies surveillance purposes regardless of whether the animal exposed an animal or person.
- Bats that have exposed a person through non-bite exposure per ACIP guidelines.
- Bats that have not exposed a person or domestic animal should not be submitted for rabies testing. An example of a bat not needing testing would be if a dead bat were picked up from the ground in a park.

All brain or head specimens where a human exposure occurred should be submitted immediately for testing and not batched with other specimens. If someone has been exposed to a possibly rabid animal, the animal should be sent immediately for testing. If the animal should test positive, the person would need to be started immediately on rabies treatment. A delay in obtaining results could result in a delay in starting needed treatment and result in a poor outcome for the exposed individual.

SKUNKS AND OTHER TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS

In 2012, no skunks tested positive for rabies. Of the 4,419 animals tested, only 187 (4 percent) were skunks. The following counties submitted skunks for rabies testing DuPage (73 skunks), Cook (28), Lake (15), McHenry (23), Will (12), Winnebago (13), Mclean (four), Jefferson (three), Jackson (three), Marion (two), Peoria (two) and one each in Henry, JoDaviess, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Knox, Rock Island, Sangamon and Vermilion.

To maintain adequate surveillance in the state, testing of the skunk must be maintained, since it is the main terrestrial animal reservoir for the rabies virus in Illinois. Negative testing of wild mammals, especially skunks, in counties is one factor used to determine whether rabies post-exposure treatment is recommended for persons bitten by dog and cats that cannot be observed for the 10 day period.

County animal control officers are especially encouraged to submit skunks for testing if:

- they have exposed a person or a domestic animal or
- they have signs suggestive of rabies, including
 - lack of fear of humans
 - aggressive behavior
 - salivation
 - sighted during the day
 - staggering
 - paralysis and muscle tremors
 - found in places unusual for a skunk

Local animal control and local public health agencies are also asked to submit skunks which have not exposed persons or animals for surveillance purposes.

This is especially important if limited numbers of skunks have been tested for rabies in their jurisdiction. This will help in determining the extent of circulation of this strain of the virus in their area of the state. Local agencies are encouraged to contact nuisance wildlife trappers, police officers, streets and sanitation personnel and others in their jurisdictions who may have freshly killed skunks that could be tested and arrange for transportation and testing by one of the IDOA or IDPH laboratories. Please check with the IDOA laboratory about testing fees for skunk testing. The IDOA laboratory typically charges a fee for rabies testing. All rabies testing is free at the IDPH laboratories. Please share with your animal control partners.