

Case Review for Ohio Veterinarians:

## Rabid Dog in Summit County Ohio, October 2011

On October 13, the Ohio Department of Health Laboratory reported that a spayed female dog from Twinsburg Ohio (Summit County) was infected with rabies. The dog, a 3-year-old Siberian Husky, was 13 months past due for rabies vaccination.

The owners reported that the dog frequently hunted and killed wild animals on their property. She presented to Twinsburg Veterinary Hospital on Saturday, October 8th with a 105 degree fever, severe ataxia, excessive salivation and a bite wound on her right front leg. Initially, canine distemper virus was the primary differential. She was treated with supportive care (IV fluids, antibiotics, fever reducers, etc) and kept in isolation. By Sunday morning, her temperature was down to 102.5 but quickly spiked again. Her behavior became more and more erratic during this time and she was observed attacking the cage door and flopping around in her cage. She died Sunday night around 10 pm. Because of the neurologic signs, the expired vaccination status and a history of frequent wildlife exposure, the veterinarian submitted the head for rabies testing.

This is only the second dog confirmed with rabies in Ohio since 1990. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed that the dog was infected with a variant of rabies circulating among raccoons. This is the same strain of rabies associated with skunks in Lake County and raccoons from Ashtabula, Trumbull and Mahoning counties this year. This is the first known animal infected with the raccoon variant confirmed in Summit County.

The Summit County Health Department reported that no one was bitten by the dog, but several people were evaluated for non-bite exposures. A non-bite rabies exposure occurs when saliva from a rabid animal is introduced into a wound or comes in contact with a mucous membrane such as the eye or mouth. Four friends and family members were treated. In addition, there were six persons from the veterinary clinic who felt they might have been exposed, sought medical advice and were started on the postexposure rabies treatment. Everyone exposed, other than the veterinarian, will require the entire vaccine series, an expensive protocol consisting of four vaccinations and one dose of rabies immune globulin. The veterinarian will only require two booster vaccinations because he had received pre-exposure vaccination in veterinary school. The other family dog and two cats have been vaccinated, and the Summit County Health Department ordered them to be quarantined for six months.

This case serves as a reminder to Ohio Veterinarians that there is always a risk that a rabid dog or cat can walk through your clinic door. Rabies should be a differential for any animal showing neurologic signs, especially if it is not currently vaccinated. Suspect animals should be isolated and staff should protect themselves from skin contact with saliva and other body fluids. This includes using gloves, covering exposed skin and wearing face protection when handling the animal or conducting procedures where there is potential for saliva contact. Fortunately, the virus does not survive long in the environment and most disinfectants, including soap and water will effectively kill the virus. Veterinary clinics are strongly encouraged to have a policy in place to deal with animal bites and rabies exposures that includes staff, volunteers and clients. This policy should include immediate wound cleansing, a medical evaluation and a report to the local health department.

CDC recommends that people who frequently work with rabies susceptible animals should receive the preexposure rabies vaccine series, even in areas where rabies is uncommon to rare. This is a series of three immunizations, given on day 0, 7 and 21-28. If such persons are exposed to rabies in the future, they are considered immunologically primed against rabies and simply require only two booster doses of vaccine and not the full series.

To help veterinarians and other animal care professionals respond appropriately to an animal bite, rabies exposure or suspect rabid animal situation, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Zoonotic Disease Program has available, "*Dealing with Rabies, Answers for Ohio Veterinarians.*" This can be viewed and downloaded from <http://1.usa.gov/ODHrabiesdocs>. This document was prepared at the request of the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association Public Health Committee. ODH would like to acknowledge Dr. Jeanette O'Quin, Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine, previously Public Health Veterinarian ODH for her work on drafting the document.

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## News Release

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John R. Kasich / Governor  
Theodore E. Wymyslo, M.D. / Director



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Office of Public Affairs 614.644.8562

### **Rabies in Wildlife Continues to Pose Risks to Pets, People**

Columbus, OH – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) wants to remind Ohioans that rabies in wildlife continues to pose a risk to pets and people. Rabies is almost always 100 percent fatal once a person or animal begins to show symptoms. Protecting pets by keeping them current on their rabies vaccine is an important buffer between wildlife rabies and human exposure. Indoor animals should also be vaccinated as rabid bats are frequently discovered by pets in the home.

Over the past two decades, ODH laboratories have confirmed two dogs and seven cats with rabies. The most recent dog report occurred on Oct. 13 when it was confirmed that a Siberian Husky from Twinsburg Ohio in Summit County was infected with rabies. The dog has since died and was not current on its rabies vaccination.

“Although this is only the second confirmed dog case in Ohio since 1997, the risk of household pets coming into contact with wild animals is ever present,” said State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Kathleen Smith, who oversees the ODH Zoonotic Disease Program. “We highly recommend that all domestic pets be kept up to date on vaccinations.”

So far this year, 43 animals have been confirmed rabid in Ohio (32 bats, 5 raccoons, 5 skunks, and one dog). With the exception of bats, all were infected with the raccoon variant. ODH continues to work with local health departments and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services to contain raccoon rabies and prevent further spread.

In addition to vaccinating your pets for rabies, there are several things Ohioans can do to protect themselves and their pets.

- Avoid wildlife and animals you do not know.
- Teach your children that they should tell you if they were bitten or scratched by an animal.
- Call your doctor and the local health department, if bitten.
- Contact your veterinarian if your pet was exposed to a bat, raccoon, skunk, or other wild carnivore.

It is important to remember that cats, as well as dogs, should be vaccinated for rabies. According to the latest published data by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cats continue to be the number one domestic animal confirmed with rabies: 300 cats confirmed in 2009 compared to 81 dogs.

Learn more on the [Rabies page](http://www.odh.ohio.gov) of the ODH website: [www.odh.ohio.gov](http://www.odh.ohio.gov).