



2017 Veterinary Alert #5: Two Rabid Cats in the Bronx

- **Two cats have tested positive for rabies in the Bronx within the last month.**
 - In 2017, to date, 2 raccoons and 2 skunks from the Bronx have also tested positive for rabies.
- **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

August 9, 2017

Dear Veterinary Colleagues,

In 2017, to date, 2 stray cats, 2 skunks, and 2 raccoons in New York City (NYC) have tested positive for rabies, all from the Bronx (Table 1). On July 19th, a stray cat that had bitten someone was found dead in a nearby backyard and subsequently tested positive for rabies. On August 8th, a rescued stray kitten that presented with vomiting, fatigue, and inappetence and tested positive for feline panleukopenia also tested positive for rabies. The family that housed the kitten and a veterinary assistant who was bitten are receiving rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). For both incidents, flyers were posted in the neighborhood to help identify any additional bite victims and further investigation is being done to identify the group of feral cats from which the rabid kitten may have originated.

Cats with rabies are of particular concern because people are more likely to interact with them than with wild animals. Rabid cats are relatively rare in NYC (Table 2). Since 1992 when raccoon rabies first appeared in NYC, there have been 16 cats testing positive for rabies, including the 2 recent rabid cats; 14 were strays. The last rabid cat in NYC was reported in 2013. There has not been a rabid dog reported in NYC in over 55 years.

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, particularly 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 for all dogs and cats in New York City. **Any unvaccinated dog or cat that may have been exposed to a rabid animal is required to either be euthanized or be quarantined for up to six months in an approved facility under daily observation and reported to the Health Department.** For any pet that has received rabies vaccine and is potentially exposed to a rabid animal,

administer a booster vaccine immediately, notify the Health Department, and instruct the owner 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 Health Department's Veterinary Public Health Services (VPHS) at 646-364-1783 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. This is done to determine whether the dog or cat could have been shedding rabies virus at the time of the bite. If the animal remains healthy, rabies post-exposure prophylaxis 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, vaccination should not occur until after the completion of the 10 day observation period. Animal bites are reportable to the Health Department's Veterinary Public Health Services Animal Bite Unit at 646-364-1799 during business hours (outside of business hours, please call the Poison Control Center at 212-POISONS or 212-764-7667).

Primary or Preexposure Vaccination for Humans

Preexposure vaccination should be considered for veterinarians and any staff whose activities bring them into frequent contact with rabies virus or potentially rabid bats, raccoons, skunks, cats, dogs, or other species at risk for having rabies. Preexposure prophylaxis is administered for several reasons:

- Simplifies postexposure prophylaxis by eliminating the need for rabies immune globulin (RIG) and decreasing the number of doses of vaccine needed
- Provides possible protection when post-exposure therapy is delayed
- Provides possible protection for exposure to rabies, such as a scratch or a bite that goes unrecognized or unreported

The Health Department does not offer rabies vaccine, for either preexposure or postexposure vaccination. Persons interested in obtaining preexposure vaccination should contact their physician or an urgent care or travel clinic.

For questions about whether people should receive rabies PEP, contact a health care provider or the Health Department at 866-692-3641. For questions pertaining to rabies preexposure vaccination and titer testing, contact the Health Department at 866-692-3641.

Additional information about rabies and a downloadable brochure for pet owners is available on the Health Department website at <http://www.nyc.gov/health/rabies>, including summary data for New York City.

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 the DOHMH VPHS 646-364-1783.
- Contact us for more information
 - Veterinary Public Health Services 646-364-1783
 - 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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Table 1. Animal Rabies in Bronx, NY, 2017*

<i>Date tested</i>	<i>Animal</i>
4/24/17	Skunk
7/7/17	Raccoon
7/19/17	Cat
7/26/17	Raccoon
8/1/17	Skunk
8/8/17	Cat

*As of 8/9/17

Table 2. Laboratory-Confirmed Rabid Animals Tested in New York City, 1992-2016

SPECIES	BRONX	BROOKLYN	MANHATTAN	QUEENS	STATEN ISLAND	TOTAL POSITIVE	TOTAL TESTED	% POSITIVE
Raccoon	184	9	145	10	181	529	7043	7.5
Skunk	43	0	0	0	5	48	313	15.3
Bat	15	7	12	4	6	44	1008	4.4
Dog	0	0	0	0	0	0	1964	0
Cat	3	1	2*	0	8	14	3100	0.5
Other**	3	1	0	1	4	9	2163	0.4
Total	248	18	159	15	204	644	15591	4.1

*One cat from Columbia County and one cat from New Jersey were tested in NYC.

**Other includes 2 coyotes (1999 and 2010, Bronx), 6 opossums (1992, 1994, 2010 Queens, 2011 Bronx, 2013 Staten Island, 2013 Brooklyn), and 1 groundhog (2007, Staten Island).