



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
Ashwin Vasani, MD, PhD  
*Commissioner*

## 2024 Veterinary Advisory #3

### 2023 Summary of Animal Rabies in New York City

- In 2023, 12 animals from New York City tested positive for rabies: 8 raccoons, 2 skunks, 1 cat, and 1 bat.
- Staten Island and Queens had the most rabid animals (5 and 4, respectively).
- Routine raccoon oral rabies vaccination (ORV) was conducted in May and October-November.
- Visit our [Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases: Information for Veterinarians and Rabies](#) webpages for more information.

*Please share with your colleagues in Veterinary Medicine and your staff*

March 13, 2024

Dear Veterinary Colleagues,

This advisory is a summary of New York City (NYC) animal rabies testing data for 2023. The most up-to-date rabies information is on NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department)'s [website](#).

In 2023, 12 animals in NYC tested positive for rabies at the NYC Public Health Laboratory: 1 skunk from the Bronx, 1 skunk from Brooklyn, 1 bat from Manhattan, 4 raccoons from Queens, and 4 raccoons and 1 cat from Staten Island. Three people received rabies post-exposure prophylaxis for exposures to a rabid NYC animal: 2 people were scratched while trying to rescue a stray cat in Staten Island and a person was bitten by an eastern red bat in Manhattan. A rabies-vaccinated dog was also monitored for exposure to a rabid raccoon in Staten Island and remained healthy.

All mammals are susceptible to rabies, but raccoons are the primary rabies reservoir species in NYC and along the Atlantic Coast. Occasionally, rabid raccoons transmit the raccoon variant of the virus to other mammals; in NYC skunks and stray cats are most often affected. Rabid bats, the main vector of human rabies in the U.S., have also been found in all 5 boroughs but in much smaller numbers than terrestrial animals. Variant sequencing on the rabid skunk in Brooklyn was consistent with big brown bat variant rabies (*Eptesicus fuscus*), indicating infection from exposure to a bat. Rabies transmission from bats to other mammals is rare and this is the first such transmission documented in NYC.

The raccoon ORV program was conducted in May in Staten Island and October-November 2023 in parts of Queens, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. In addition, pre-emptive ORV baiting was done in Brooklyn in April while awaiting variant sequencing results on the rabid skunk.

Dogs and cats are required to maintain vaccination against rabies. Rabid raccoons pose the greatest risk of rabies for pets and other domestic animals. Indoor pets can be at risk for rabies if they escape outside or if a rabid bat enters the home. No rabid dogs have been reported in NYC since 1954, though dogs infected with the raccoon variant have been reported in areas neighboring NYC. Since 1992, 30 cats have tested positive for rabies; almost all were strays.

Consider rabies for any animal presenting with a progressive neurologic illness, especially in a stray animal, an animal with a bite wound of unknown origin or exposure to a potentially rabid animal, or a dog from a country where the [canine rabies](#) variant is present.

**Management guidelines for dogs and cats with a known exposure to a rabies vector species or any rabid animal (see [flowchart](#) online for details)**

Upon consultation with the Veterinary Public Health Services’ (VPHS) Animal Bite Unit (ABU), cases will be assessed on an individual basis and options may include:

- If never vaccinated against rabies
  - Quarantine in veterinary facility for up to 6 months at owner’s expense or euthanize
- If currently vaccinated against rabies
  - Immediately give booster vaccine. Confine and observe in owner’s home for 45 days
- If not currently vaccinated
  - Managed on case-by-case basis



Veterinary Flowcharts (nyc.gov)

**Management guidelines for healthy dogs and cats that have bitten a person (see [flowchart](#) online for details)**

- Upon consultation with the Veterinary Public Health Services’ (VPHS) Animal Bite Unit (ABU), pet owners will be directed to confine and observe dog or cat for 10 days
  - If animal is not currently vaccinated, do not vaccinate until end of the 10-day observation period
  - If animal remains healthy, rabies post-exposure prophylaxis not indicated for bite victim
  - If animal becomes ill, must be evaluated by veterinarian and the Animal Bite Unit

**What All Veterinarians Can Do**

- **Educate** clients to:
  - Avoid contact with wild 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 NYC Health Department’s Veterinary Public Health Services (VPHS) Animal Bite Unit

During business hours	VPHS Animal Bite Unit (ABU)	646-364-1799
After business hours	NYC Poison Control Center	212-POISONS (212-764-7667)

- **Questions?** Call the NYC Health Department

Questions on rabies exposures in pets, animal bites, and other animal-related issues	Veterinary Public Health Services	646-364-1783
Questions on rabies exposures in people, PEP, and other human-related rabies issues	Bureau of Communicable Disease	347-396-2600
After business hours	NYC Poison Control Center	212-764-7667

As always, we greatly appreciate your partnership and cooperation.

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Norma S. Torres, Director, Veterinary Public Health Services, Division of Environmental Health

Jie Fu, Chief of Rabies Lab, Bureau of Public Health Laboratory

**Table 1. NYC Rabies Testing\* by Animal and Borough, 2023**

ANIMAL	BRONX		BROOKLYN		MANHATTAN		QUEENS		STATEN ISLAND		NYC TOTAL	
	Tested	Positive	Tested	Positive	Tested	Positive	Tested	Positive	Tested	Positive	Tested	Positive
<b>BAT</b>	7	0	3	0	13	1	5	0	2	0	30	1
<b>CAT</b>	11	0	16	0	20	0	15	0	8	1	70	1
<b>DOG</b>	11	0	6	0	9	0	7	0	3	0	36	0
<b>OPOSSUM</b>	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	8	0
<b>RACCOON</b>	42	0	54	0	37	0	65	4	9	4	207	8
<b>SKUNK</b>	9	1	4	1	3	0	0	0	3	0	19	2
<b>OTHER**</b>	22	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	5	0	33	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>12</b>

\*Tested at NYC DOHMH Public Health Lab (n=367) or New York State Wadsworth Center (n=40).

\*\*Other = 16 rats, 8 squirrels, 4 mice, and 1 each cattle, coyote, deer, fox, groundhog

**Table 2. NYC Rabies Testing by Animal and Year, 2019-2023**

ANIMAL	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Tested	Positive								
BAT	38	1	38	1	18	0	22	2	30	1
CAT	140	1	83	5	70	3	88	3	70	1
DOG	43	0	25	0	30	0	24	0	36	0
GROUNDHOG	5	0	2	0	7	0	2	0	1	0
OPOSSUM	23	0	19	0	26	0	17	0	8	0
RACCOON	424	21	252	28	224	15	257	30	207	8
SKUNK	25	1	21	4	6	1	18	3	19	2
SQUIRREL	13	0	7	0	11	0	8	0	8	0
OTHER**	6	0	7	0	16	0	21	0	24	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>12</b>

Includes inconclusive tests for 1 bat in 2020 and 1 bat and cat in 2022

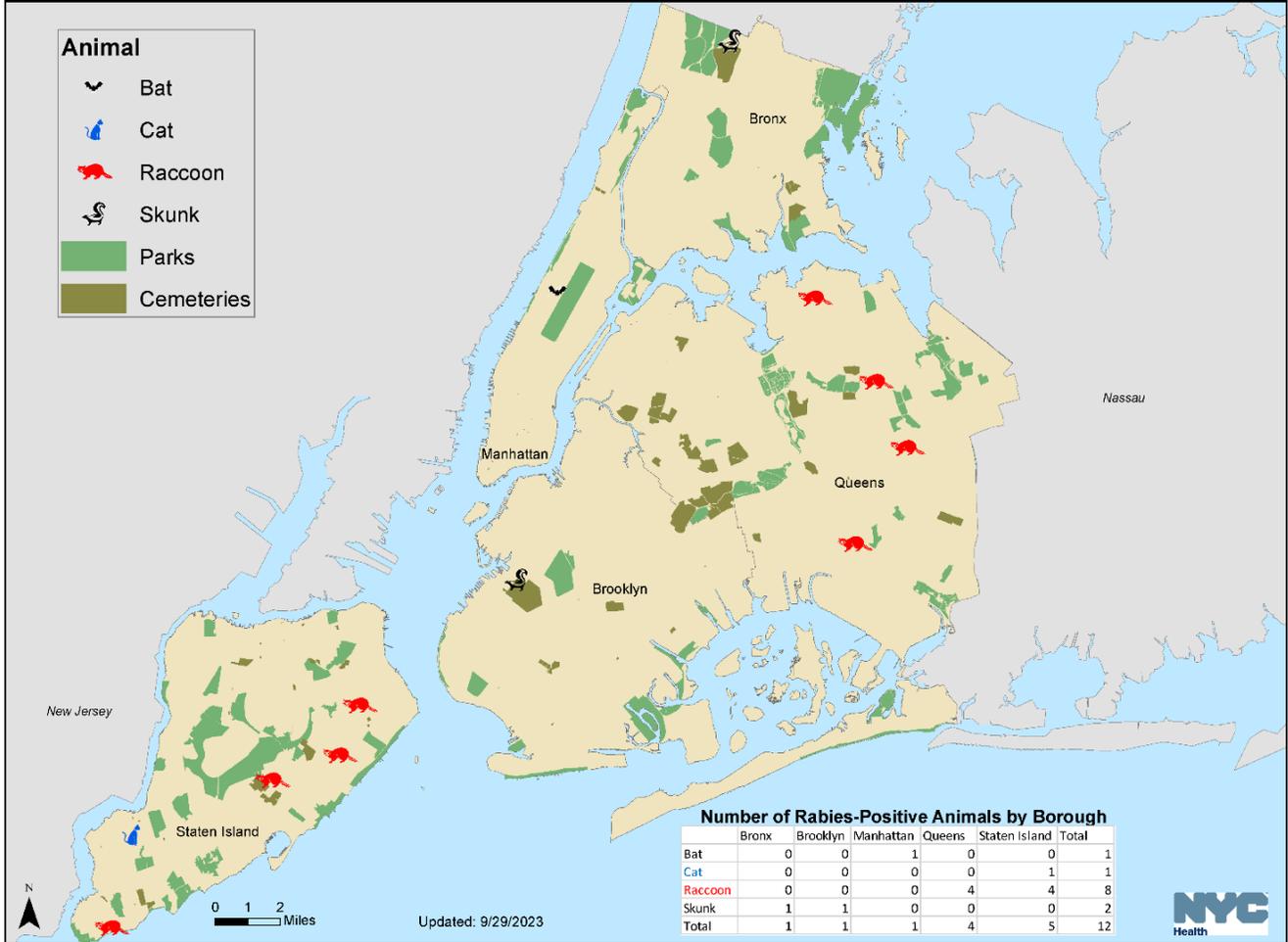
\*\*Other = 36 rats, 17 mice, 3 chipmunks, 3 foxes, 3 rabbits, 2 deer, 2 ferrets, 1 each bear, beaver, cattle, chinchilla, coyote, goat, horse, and sheep

**Table 3. NYC Animal Rabies Testing by Borough and Year, 2019-2023**

BOROUGH	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Tested	Positive								
BRONX	83	3	76	14	45	4	75	13	102	1
BROOKLYN	167	0	69	1	60	0	152	2	87	1
MANHATTAN	122	11	61	2	68	1	58	0	83	1
QUEENS	233	0	153	3	180	3	132	17	101	4
STATEN ISLAND	112	10	95	18	55	11	40	6	30	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>12</b>

Includes inconclusive tests for 1 in Manhattan in 2020 and 1 in Brooklyn and Manhattan in 2022

## Animal Rabies in New York City, 2023



Visit the NYC Health Department's webpage for information and resources for veterinarians: [Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases: Information for Providers](#)

If you do not receive these alerts via email and would like to be added to the distribution list, please email [zivdu@health.nyc.gov](mailto:zivdu@health.nyc.gov)

### Report animal diseases to the NYC Department of Health

- Submit online through a [secure web-based reporting platform](#)
- Call 347-396-2600
- Fax the [Animal Disease Case Report form](#) to 347-396-2753

**Report upon suspicion:** Anthrax, brucellosis, glanders, influenza (novel with pandemic potential), monkeypox, plague, Q fever, rabies, SARS, tularemia

**Report upon laboratory diagnosis:** Arboviral encephalitides, carbapenem-resistant organism (CRO), leptospirosis, psittacosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, salmonellosis, tuberculosis

**Report within 24 hours any outbreak or suspected outbreak of any disease, condition, or syndrome, of known or unknown etiology, which may pose a danger to public health.**