

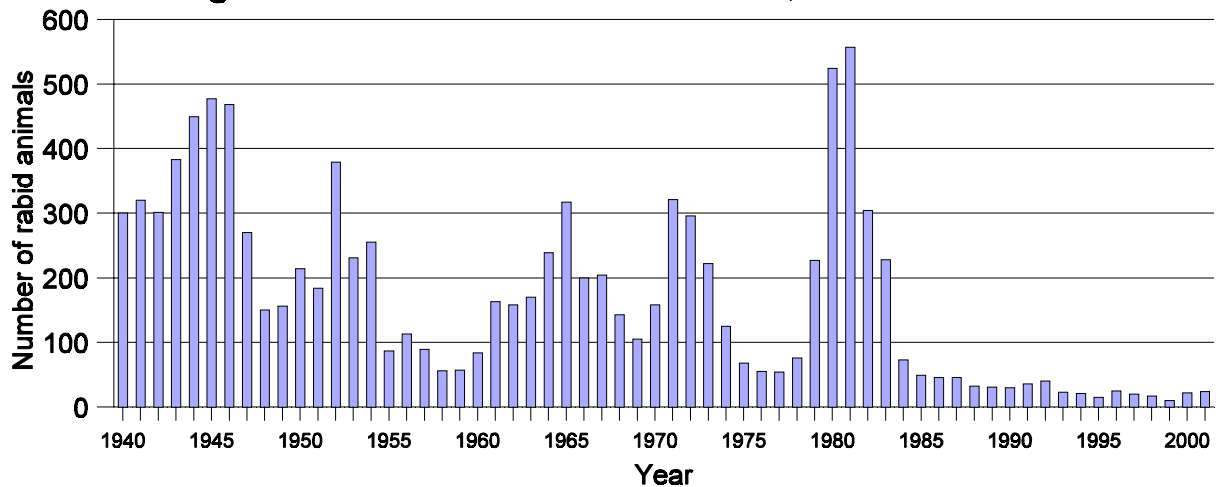
Animal Rabies Surveillance - 2001

During 2001, 4,281 animals were submitted for rabies testing to the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the Illinois Department of Public Health diagnostic laboratories. Of these, 69 were determined to be unsatisfactory and could not be tested; 24 were fluorescent antibody-positive for rabies (see Table 1). The occurrence of animal rabies in Illinois is shown in Figure 1. It is the third year in a row with no terrestrial animals diagnosed with rabies.

Table 1. Animals testing positive, by species and year, Illinois

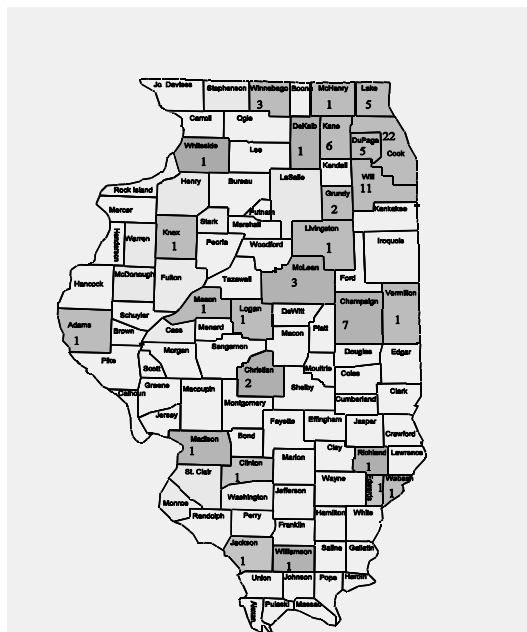
Species	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Bat	27	19	16	12	23	16	16	10	22	24
Cat	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cattle	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dog	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fox	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skunk	9	3	4	2	1	4	1	0	0	0
Raccoon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	40	23	21	15	25	20	17	10	22	24

Figure 1. Animal Rabies in Illinois, 1940-2001



Skunks

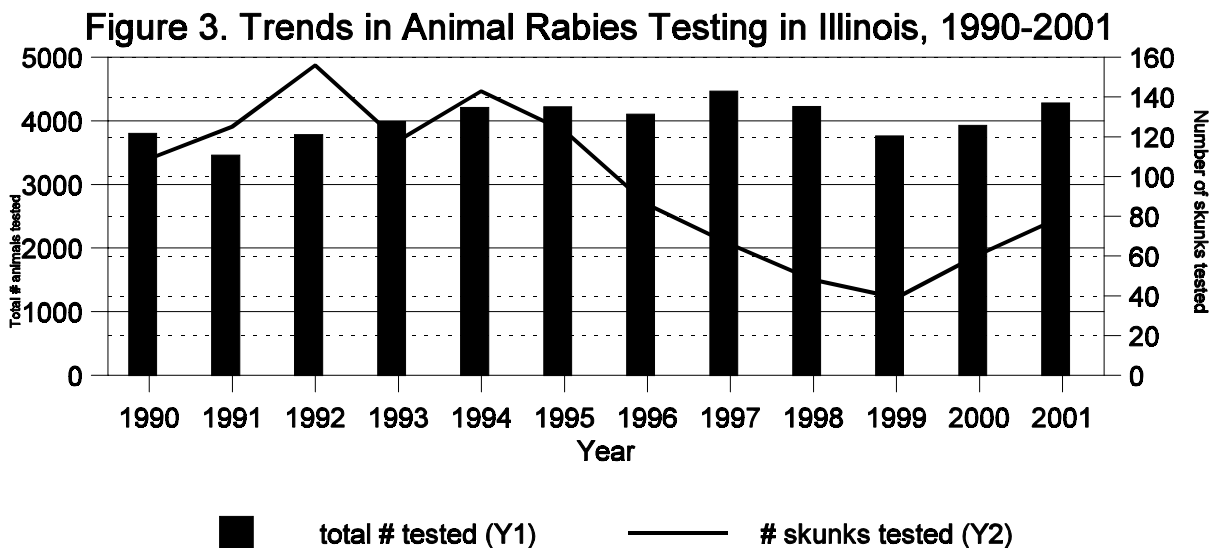
During 2001, no skunks with rabies were identified. However, the number of skunks tested – 80 – was very low. At least one skunk was tested from each of 26 counties in Illinois; no skunks were tested in 76 counties. Figure 2 illustrates the number of skunks tested by county in 2001.



The number of skunks tested annually increased in 2000 and 2001, up from the extremely low testing numbers in 1998 and 1999 (Figure 3). To maintain adequate surveillance in the state, testing of the main terrestrial animal reservoir, the skunk, must be maintained. Negative testing of wild mammals in counties is one factor used to determine whether rabies post-exposure treatment is recommended for stray dog and cat bites. **Therefore, county animal control officers are encouraged to submit skunks for testing if they have exposed a person or a domestic animal or if they have signs suggestive of rabies, including lack of fear of humans, aggressive behavior, salivation, staggering, paralysis and muscle tremors, or are found in places unusual for a skunk.**

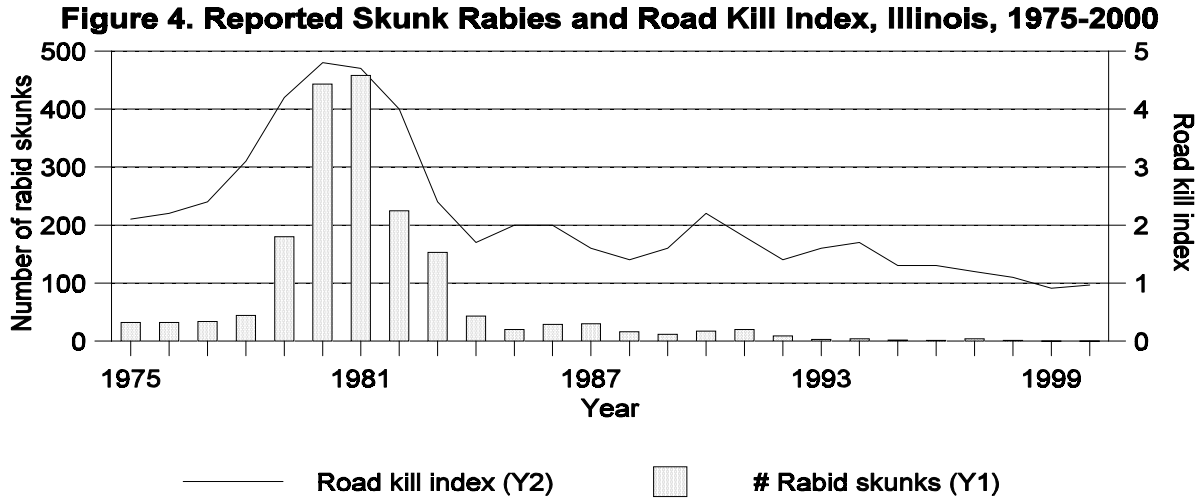
Figure 2. Skunks tested for rabies, Illinois, 2001

In addition, the IDPH and IDA laboratories have agreed to test for another year skunks that have not exposed a person or domestic animal. Local animal control and local public health agencies are encouraged to contact nuisance wildlife trappers and others in their jurisdictions who may have freshly killed skunks that could be tested and to arrange for transport and testing by one of the



laboratories. Rabies testing is free at the IDA and IDPH laboratory for this enhanced skunk surveillance program. For other animal rabies testing, the IDA laboratories charge \$5 per animal. All rabies testing is free at the IDPH laboratories.

Increases in the skunk population have preceded skunk rabies outbreaks in the past. The skunk road kill index provided by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources is used to monitor the skunk population in the state (see Figure 4).



Summary

Reported animal rabies is at an all time low in Illinois. In 2001, 82 skunks were tested, an increase over the 61 tested statewide in 2000. Adequate surveillance of rabies in skunks is necessary to feel confident in reporting that terrestrial animal rabies does not occur in a particular area in the state. This information is vital when assessing the need for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis after stray dog and cat bites in the state. Local jurisdictions are encouraged to submit skunks for rabies testing to maintain surveillance in their locality. Raccoon strain rabies has been halted in Ohio through the use of an oral rabies baiting program. The two closest states with raccoon strain rabies cases are Pennsylvania and West Virginia.