

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

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DATE: January 28, 2003

SUBJECT: **Animal Rabies Surveillance for 2002**

In 2002 a total of 4006 animals were submitted for rabies testing to the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDA) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) diagnostic laboratories. Of these, 31 were fluorescent antibody-positive for rabies and all were bats. Animals testing positive for rabies are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Rabies test positive animals by species and year in Illinois

Species	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Bat	19	16	12	23	16	16	10	22	24	31
Cat	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cattle	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dog	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fox	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skunk	3	4	2	1	4	1	0	0	0	0
Raccoon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	23	21	15	25	20	17	10	22	24	31

BATS

In 2002 bats were the only species identified with rabies in Illinois. For the past three years no terrestrial animals were diagnosed with rabies. This year, approximately 912 bats have been tested for rabies. Of those tested, approximately 860 were determined negative for the virus, 31 were confirmed positive and 21 tests were inconclusive. The percent positive in 2002 was 3.5 percent (See Table 2).

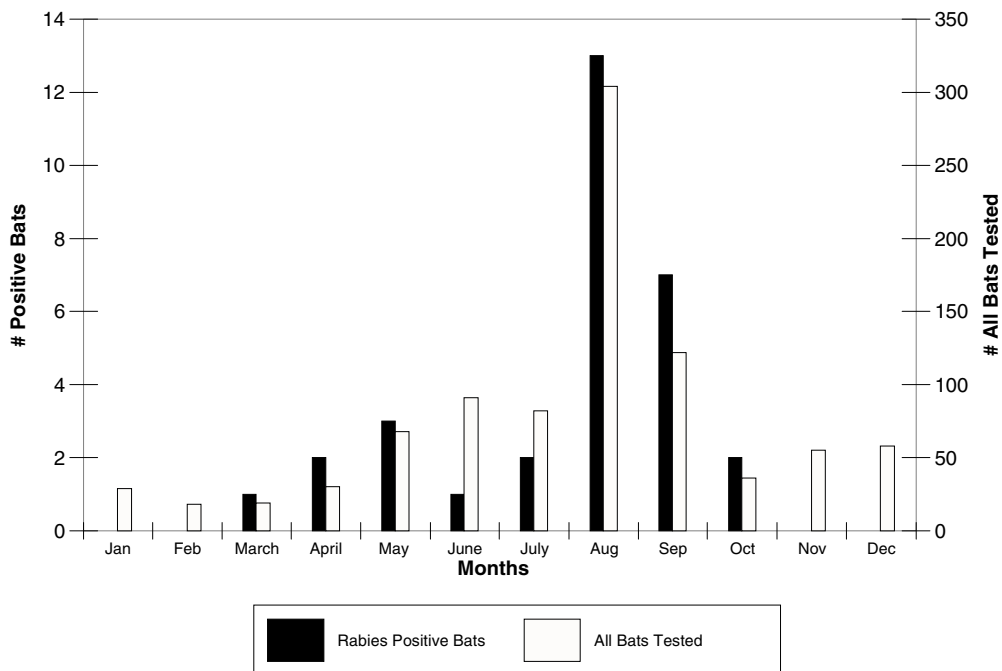
Table 2. Bat rabies testing results in Illinois for 2002.

Negative	Positive	Inconclusive	Total Tested	% Positive
860	31	21	912	3.5%

Bats testing positive for rabies were found in the following counties: Carroll (1), Coles (1), Cook (3), Cumberland (1), DuPage (3), Fayette (1), Jackson (4), Madison (1), Marion (1), McHenry (1), Sangamon (5), White (4), Will (3), and Winnebago (2). The majority (60 percent) of testing occurred from May to August when bats are most active and likely to come in contact with humans or pets, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

??Species was determined in ?? of the bats tested. Of those, ?? were big brown bats, ?? were red and ?? were of the small brown species.

Figure 1. Number of all bats and positive bats tested in Illinois by month for 2002.



SPECIMEN SUBMISSION

Rabies specimens should be submitted under the following conditions:

1. When a domestic animal or a person is bitten by an animal.
2. When an animal exhibits the neurological symptoms of rabies.

All brain or head specimens should be submitted immediately for testing and not batched with other specimens.

SKUNKS

In 2002 no skunks tested positive for rabies, yet the number of skunks tested continues to be low. Of the 4006 animals tested, only 96 (2.4 percent) were skunks. The following counties have submitted skunks for rabies testing: Cass, Clay, Cook, Crawford, DeKalb, DuPage, Hancock, Jackson, Jasper, JoDaviess, Kane, Lake, Madison, Mason, McLean, Sangamon, St. Clair and Will. Will County has provided 36 skunks for testing at this point, exceeding all other counties.

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 stray dog and cat bites.

County animal control officers are 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
 - staggering
 - aggressive behavior
 - paralysis and muscle tremors
 - salivation
 - 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. This is especially important if no skunks have been tested for rabies in their jurisdiction. Local agencies are encouraged to contact nuisance wildlife trappers 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 IDA or IDPH 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.