

Rabies, Animal

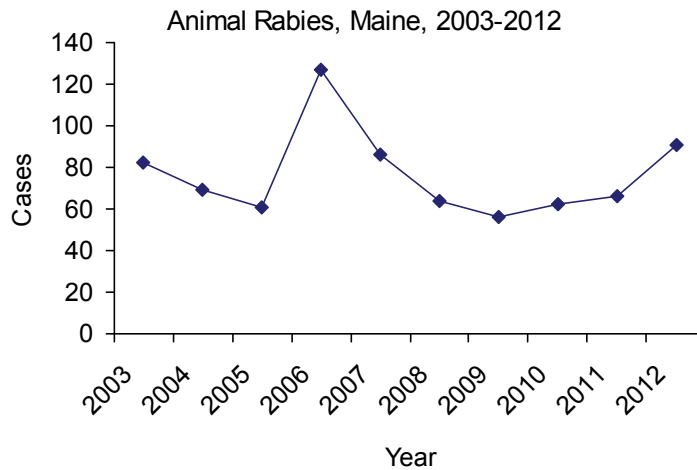
2012 Case Total **91**
Maine Rate **N/A**
U.S. Count (2011) **6,037**

Rabies is a zoonotic viral disease that affects the central nervous system. All mammals are susceptible to rabies. Rabies in humans is rare in the United States. The majority of rabies infections occur in wild animals, including raccoons, skunks, foxes, and bats. Unvaccinated domestic animals are also at risk for getting rabies.

The rabies virus is found in the saliva and neural tissue of infected animals. Rabies is transmitted from the bite of a rabid animal. Rabies can also be spread if infectious material from a rabid animal gets into an open wound or mucous membrane (eyes, nose, or mouth) of a susceptible person or animal. Bat bites can be difficult to detect. Since bats are implicated in most human rabies cases, whether or not a bite was reported, any contact with a bat should be evaluated by a healthcare provider.

Rabies infection causes acute progressive encephalopathy. Early symptoms include fever and general discomfort. As the disease progresses, symptoms may include difficulty sleeping, anxiety, confusion, hallucinations, excessive drooling, difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia. Rabies is almost always fatal a few days after symptom onset.

- 91 animal rabies cases represent an increase from 66 cases in 2011
- 85 were tested at HETL and six were tested at USDA as part of supplemental surveillance in Northern Maine
- The 2007-2011 median number of cases per year was 64
- The last reported case of human rabies in Maine was in 1937
- 130 persons were recommended to receive PEP; 25 were exposed to a laboratory-confirmed rabid animal



Positive Rabies Results by Species, Maine, 2012

Animal	Number Positive
Raccoon	45
Skunk	30
Fox	5
Bat	5
Cat	4
Dog	1
Woodchuck	1

Rabies testing requires central nervous system or brain tissue, obtained postmortem. The state public health laboratory uses direct fluorescent antibody testing to determine if wild or domestic animals that expose people or domestic animals are rabid.

Maine CDC works with Animal Control Officers, Game Wardens, veterinarians, and healthcare providers to recommend control measures for people and domestic animals after an exposure. Persons who are exposed to a confirmed or suspect rabid animal should receive rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), which is a combination of rabies vaccine and immune globulin. Rabies PEP is very effective in preventing disease after an exposure.

Increased public awareness about rabies may reduce the number of exposures. Prevention measures include keeping pets up-to-date on rabies vaccine and avoiding wildlife.