

The Rabies Reporter

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RABIES IN ONTARIO DURING THE THIRD QUARTER

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The Rabies Reporter, a scientific newsletter about current issues in rabies research and control, is a joint effort of the Rabies Research Unit of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; the Rabies Laboratory at the Animal Diseases Research Institute of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; the Ontario Ministry of Health; and the Geographic Information Systems Laboratory at Queens University, Kingston. Articles for future issues will be welcomed by the editor. The Rabies Reporter is not refereed, and should not be cited in papers intended for refereed journals. Send contributions, letters and inquiries to:

The Rabies Reporter
Rabies Research &
Development Unit
Ontario Ministry of Natural
Resources,
P.O. Box 4840
Peterborough, ON K9J 8N8

Visit: www.gis.queensu.ca/RRReporter/ or
www.rabies.mnr.gov.on.ca

The good news is that, although there have been more rabid raccoons in Ontario during the first three quarters of 2003 than during the same period in 2002, there were no animals infected with the raccoon strain of rabies in Ontario during the third quarter. Even though the summer months tend to have lower numbers of rabid raccoons, this absence of cases has extended to the beginning of December 2003. Keep your fingers crossed that this will continue into the new year.

Rabies in northern Ontario has continued to be very quiet during 2003 with only one rabid wolf in the Sudbury region during January. This outbreak may have disappeared completely or moved into areas which are sparsely populated. Without people to encounter and submit suspicious wildlife, there is no way to know for sure that rabies is completely gone.

There have been only three rabid foxes in Ontario to the end of September. Two of these were from Grey county. The third was a fox from Lanark county which was infected with a bat strain of rabies. This was very good news for the Rabies Unit as there has not been a case of arctic fox strain of rabies in all of eastern Ontario in almost ten years. If the fox had been infected with the raccoon strain of rabies, it would have been a significant movement from the area where raccoon rabies has currently been identified.

The number of rabid skunks has

also remained much lower than the levels in 2002. To the end of September, there have been 12 rabid skunks in western Ontario compared to 36 during this time in 2002. Although the numbers are low, the rabid skunks have been geographically spread throughout western Ontario.

Perhaps most interesting and most disconcerting is the number of rabid livestock compared to the numbers of rabid wildlife. During the first nine months of 2003, there have been 22 cases of arctic fox strain of rabies. Two of these were foxes and six were skunks from Grey county; four were skunks from Bruce county; two were skunks from Huron county; and the remaining seven (32% of all arctic fox strain cases) were livestock. The livestock cases were much more spread out than the foxes or skunks. Of the seven cases, two were from Dufferin county, one was from Wellington county, one was from Grey county, two were from Bruce county, and the final case was from Victoria county in central Ontario.

The goat from Victoria county (which was infected with arctic fox strain of rabies) was diagnosed with rabies on September 9. This came as somewhat of a surprise to the Rabies Unit staff as there had not been a case of arctic fox strain of rabies since early 2001.

This single case shows the need for continued diligence in rabies surveillance. Before this case was diagnosed,

there were no plans to distribute rabies vaccine baits in central Ontario. After all, it had been over two years since the last confirmed case and the Rabies Unit's decision criteria is to bait an area for two years after the last confirmed case. Had this goat not been submitted for rabies testing, there could have been a mini-outbreak of arctic fox strain of rabies reoccur in central Ontario. The goat had never left the farm where it was located and so must have been infected by another local animal.

In early October, an area approximately 50 km in diameter surrounding the rabid goat was aerially baited to prevent the reinfection of the area with arctic fox strain of rabies.

Interestingly, there have been no confirmed cases of rabies in companion animals to date in 2003. Although, the incidence of rabid cats and dogs is normally low, it is rarely zero. Is this a result of better public education and mandatory pet vaccination laws? In 2002, there were three rabid dogs and three rabid cats during the first three quarters.

The number of rabid bats, as expected, soared during the third quarter. There were 44 rabid bats during the third quarter alone giving a total of 62 for 2003. There were also 62 rabid bats to the end of September in 2002. There is still potential for this to be another record setting year for rabid bats.

*Beverly Stevenson
RRDU
Peterborough, ON*

NEW FORMAT FOR UPCOMING ISSUES OF THE RABIES REPORTER

Once again, the Rabies Reporter is undergoing some format changes.

The Rabies Reporter will continue to be issued four times per year. However, issues number one and issues number three will now be much shorter and contain only an article describing the current rabies situation in Ontario during that quarter, the tables outlining where rabies cases occurred and the maps which normally accompany each issue.

Issues number two and four will remain unchanged. They will still include an article on the current rabies situation, information on rabies control operations in Ontario and elsewhere, the rabies case tables and the accompanying maps. There will also still be special interest articles. These articles will be targeted towards our reading audience.

If you would like to see an article in an upcoming issue or if you would like to submit an article for an upcoming issue, please contact the editor at:

Beverly Stevenson
Rabies Research and Development Unit
Ministry of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 4840
Peterborough, Ontario
K9J 8N8

Or via e-mail at:

beverly.stevenson@mnr.gov.on.ca

This is also a good opportunity for you to sign up for electronic notification when each issue of the Rabies Reporter is available. Not only does this reduce distribution costs, but illustrations are also in colour making them much easier to interpret.

At present, approximately ninety per cent of the subscribers to the Rabies Reporter receive it electronically.

*Beverly Stevenson
RRDU
Peterborough, ON*

HOW TO REACH US:

Rabies Reporter
Rabies Research and Development Unit
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 4840
1600 West Bank Drive
Peterborough, ON
K9J 8N8
Canada

Office phone: 705-755-2272
Office fax: 705-755-2276
Email: beverly.stevenson@mnr.gov.on.ca
Webmail: rabies@webmail.mnr.gov.on.ca

Animal Rabies Report: July to September 2003

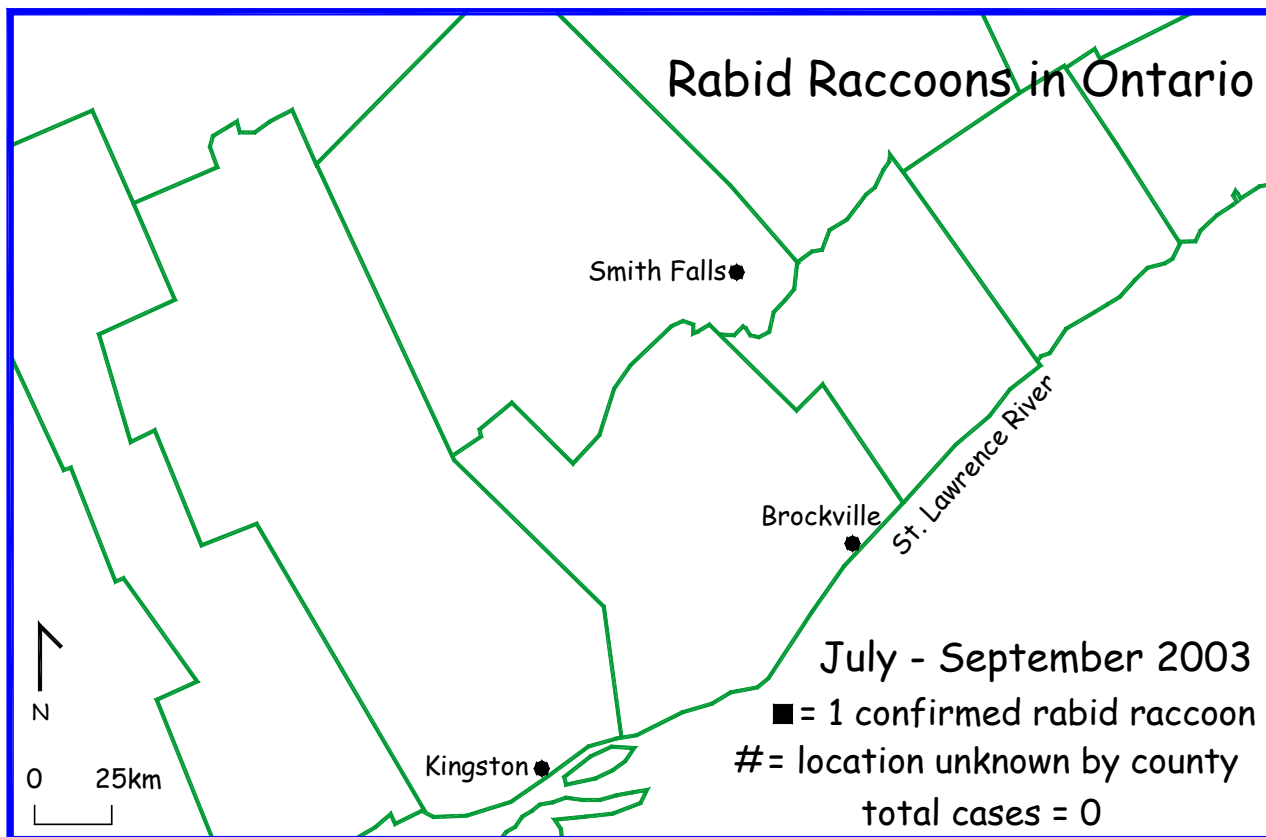
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Animal Rabies Report: July to September 2003

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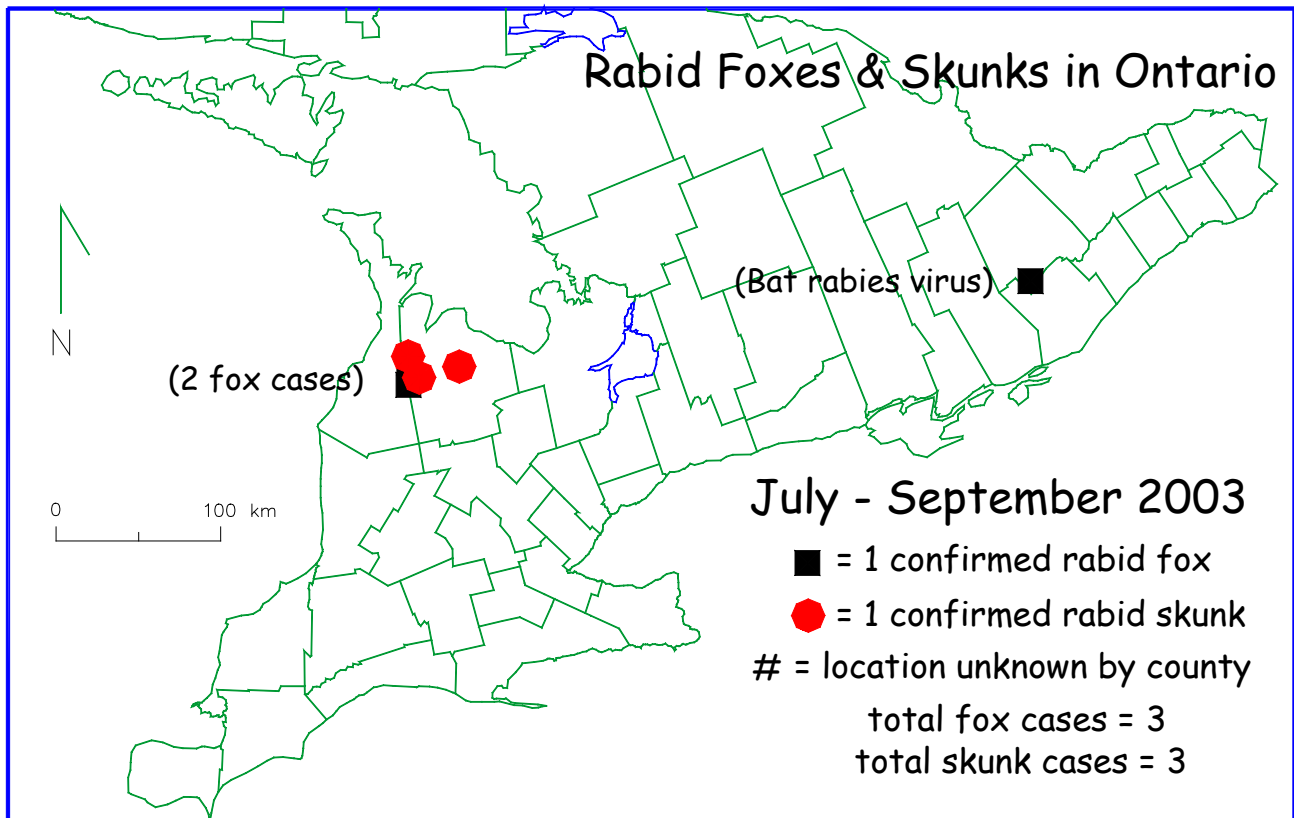
Animal Rabies Report: July to September 2003

Animal Type	Fox			Raccoon			Skunk			Other Wildlife			Bat			Dog			Cat			Livestock			Totals		
County or Region	#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative	
		03	02		03	02		03	02		03	02		03	02		03	02		03	02		03	02		03	02
Northern																											
Muskoka																								0	0	0	
Parry Sound																								0	0	0	
Nipissing			2																					0	0	2	
Sudbury			33			2					1	2					2			1			3	0	1	43	
Cochrane			1																					0	0	1	
Timiskaming			3																				1	0	0	4	
Algoma																							1	0	0	1	
Thunder Bay																								0	0	0	
Rainy River																								0	0	0	
Kenora																								0	0	0	
Regional Totals																											
Eastern	1	1			16	10							7	14	14									8	31	24	
Central													12	15	20			1				1	1		13	16	21
Western	2	2	2				4	12	36				5	10	6			1			2	1	6	2	12	30	49
Southern													20	23	22						1			1	20	23	24
Northern			39			2					1	2						2			1			5	0	1	51
TOTALS	3	3	41	0	16	12	4	12	36	0	1	2	44	62	62	0	0	4	0	0	4	2	7	8	53	101	169
Notes for this quarter:	The livestock was a bovine in Dufferin county and a caprine in Victoria county (arctic fox strain). All bats were big brown bats except for one little brown bat in Halton. The fox in Lanark had bat strain.																										



GIS Lab, Queen's University

Data Source: Ontario Laboratory - Fallowfield (CFIA)



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