

The Rabies Reporter

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Ontario Rabies During the
First 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:

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Rabies in Ontario During the First Quarter

So far, 2004 is reminiscent of the late 1990s with only 18 cases during the first three months. The numbers have not been this low since 1999 when raccoon strain rabies first entered Ontario.

Part of the reason may be that for the third consecutive quarter, there was not a single confirmed case of raccoon strain rabies in Ontario. Typically, March and April are significant months for terrestrial rabies cases due to the increased transmission of rabies during the mating season.

The number of rabid bats was also low with only two for the entire quarter (one in Ottawa-Carleton and one in Middlesex). Bat cases are typically low during this time period due to winter hibernation.

The number of rabid foxes and skunks was also low with only one rabid fox and four rabid skunks. The fox was a surveillance animal collected by the Rabies Research and Development Unit. It was a road-kill from Perth county collected in November 2003 but was not tested until 2004. The rabid skunks were scattered throughout southern Ontario with one case in Simcoe county, one case in Dufferin county, one case in Grey county and one case in Bruce county.

The disappointing feature in 2004 is the number of livestock cases compared to the total number of cases. Over 55% of all of the cases (10 of the 18) were livestock. In Grey county, there were two rabid cows from a single farm. There were also three rabid cows from a single farm in Simcoe county. This clustering of cases may make the rabies situation appear worse than it actually is. Normally, in wildlife cases, it is expected that this clustering of cases occurs. If one animal in a family unit is infected with rabies, it is quite probable that other members of the same family unit will become infected. Only occasionally though is

more than one wildlife case found clustered with another case. With livestock and domestic animals, normally all cases are diagnosed. Traditionally, it is believed that only a fraction of wildlife rabies cases are discovered. It is very easy for a wild animal in rural areas to become infected with rabies and die without being encountered by a human.

The livestock cases are a good indication that not all wildlife cases are being diagnosed. In southwestern Ontario, the typical home range for a skunk is less than 3 km². All of the livestock cases were much further than this from the nearest rabid skunk. The shortest distance from a rabid skunk to a rabid cow in 2004 was 13 km. One of the rabid cows was over 30 km from the nearest rabid skunk (and more than two counties away from the nearest rabid fox). Livestock and domestic animals may become the best indicators in future of the remnant wildlife rabies cases.

Hopefully, the low incidence of diagnosed rabies cases for the first quarter will be an indication of how the remainder of 2004 will proceed.

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Animal Rabies Report: January to March 2004

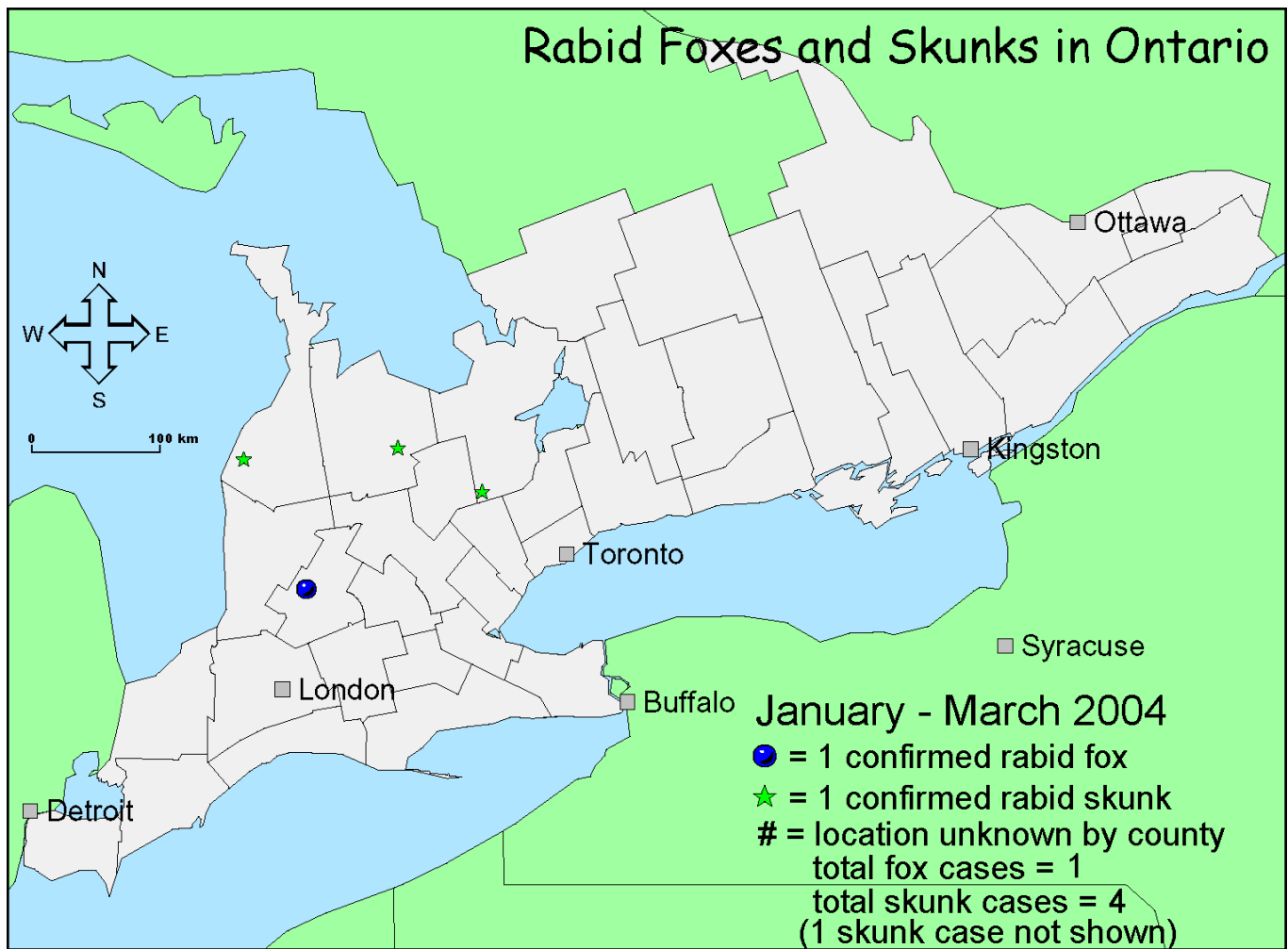
Animal Type	Fox			Raccoon			Skunk			Other Wildlife			Bat			Dog			Cat			Livestock			Totals		
County or Region	#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative	
		04	03		04	03		04	03		04	03		04	03		04	03		04	03		04	03			
Eastern																											
Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry																									0	0	0
Prescott																									0	0	0
Russell																									0	0	0
Ottawa-Carleton												1	1												1	1	0
Renfrew																									0	0	0
Lanark																									0	0	0
Leeds and Grenville						7																			0	0	7
Frontenac													1												0	0	1
Lennox & Addington																									0	0	0
Central																											
Hastings																									0	0	0
Prince Edward																									0	0	0
Northumberland																									0	0	0
Victoria																									0	0	0
Haliburton																									0	0	0
Peterborough													1												0	0	1
Durham																									0	0	0
York Region																									0	0	0
Toronto																									0	0	0
Simcoe							1	1													4	4			5	5	0

Animal Rabies Report: January to March 2004

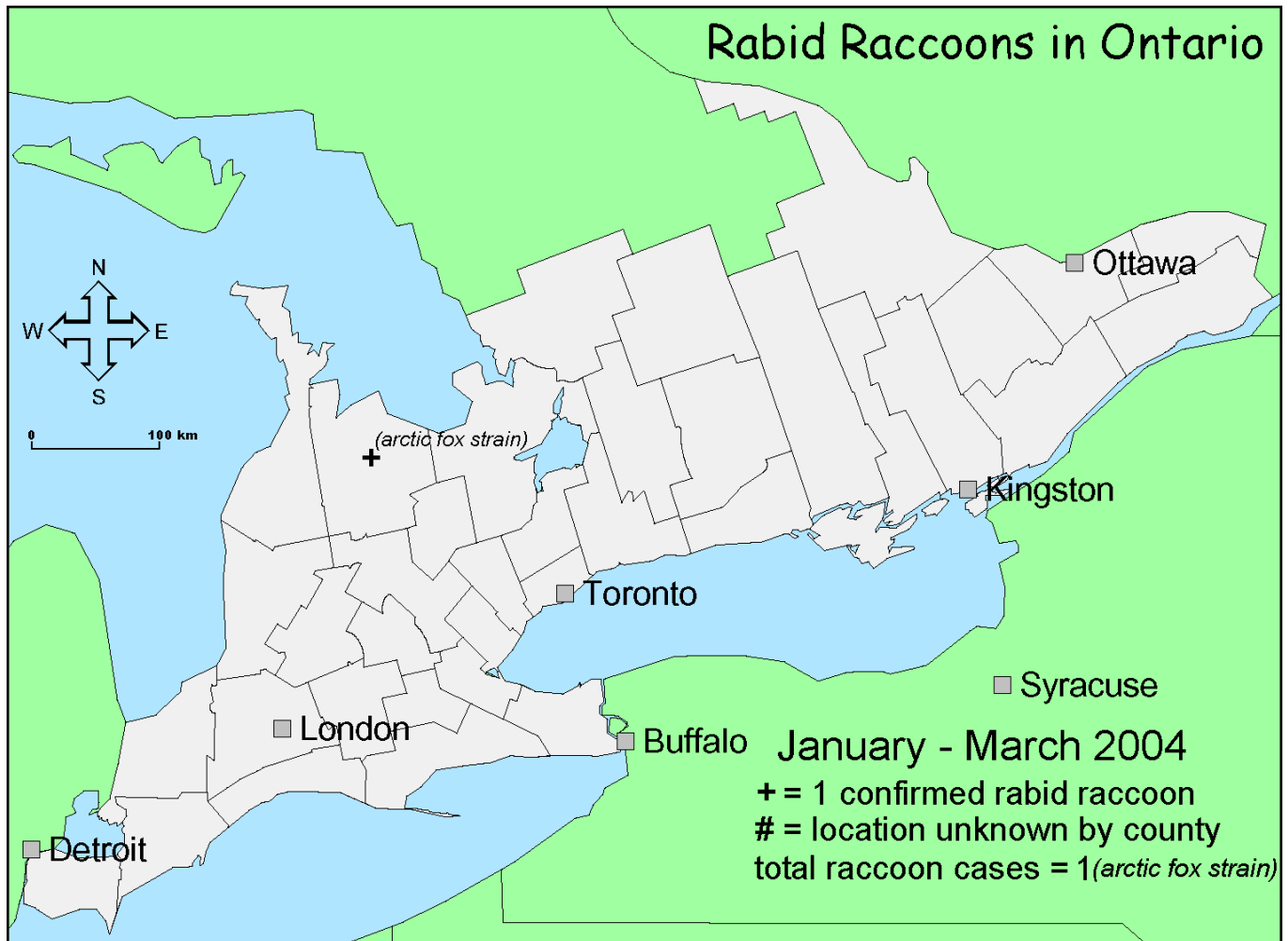
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Animal Rabies Report: January to March 2004

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County or Region	#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative		#	Cumulative	
		04	03		04	03		04	03		04	03		04	03		04	03		04	03		04	03			
Northern																											
Muskoka																								0	0	0	
Parry Sound																								0	0	0	
Nipissing																								0	0	0	
Sudbury											1													0	0	1	
Cochrane																								0	0	0	
Timiskaming																								0	0	0	
Algoma																								0	0	0	
Thunder Bay			1																					0	0	1	
Rainy River																								0	0	0	
Kenora																								0	0	0	
Regional Totals																											
Eastern						7							1	1	1										1	1	8
Central							1	1							1							4	4		5	5	1
Western	1	1		1	1		3	3	3						2							6	6	4	11	11	9
Southern													1	1	1										1	1	1
Northern			1									1													0	0	2
TOTALS	1	1	1	1	1	7	4	4	3	0	0	1	2	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	4	18	18	21
Notes for this quarter:	Both bats were big brown bats. The livestock cases included 1 horse in Bruce county. All other livestock cases were cattle. The red fox was obtained during the Rabies Unit surveillance program and was actually found dead in November 2003.																										



GIS Lab, Queen's University
Data Source: Ontario Laboratory-Fallowfield (CFIA)



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