

Your Zoonosis Connection

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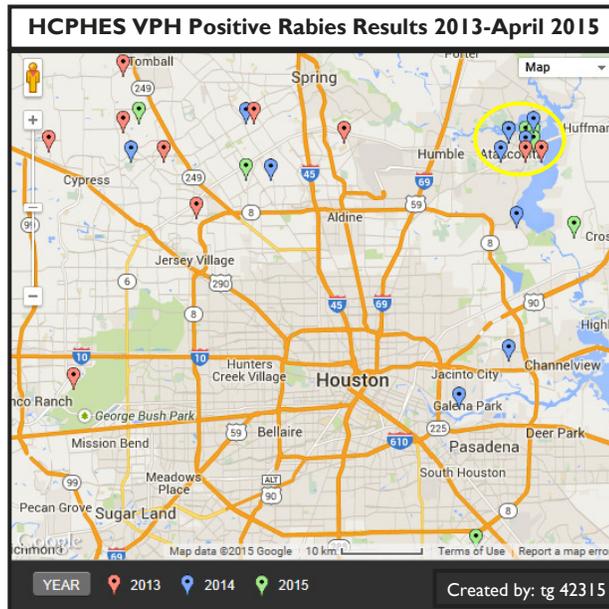
Rabies Watch: 2015

Rabies continues to be a serious health threat to people and domestic animals. In Harris County, it remains enzootic in the bat population. The map below illustrates the locations of the positive specimens for 2013 through April 2015 submitted by Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services (HCPHES), Veterinary Public Health (VPH). The majority of the positive specimens are bats (27) with the remaining two specimens being a skunk and a dog. As illustrated by the map, zip code 77346 continues to be the “hot spot” for rabies positive bats. The table below depicts the specimens submitted in 2015 to the City of Houston rabies lab for testing. This year has been very busy thus far, as Harris County has received 10 specimens with non-negative rabies test results, 7 of which were positive for rabies. The continued incidence of rabies in Harris County, specifically zip code 77346, serves as a reminder to keep pets and livestock current on rabies vaccinations.

The high risk carriers in Texas are bats, coyotes, foxes, raccoons and skunks. Any abnormal behaviors in these species and all potential exposures with these species should be reported to the Local Rabies Control Authority. When possible, animals involved in potential rabies exposures should be tested to prevent unnecessary post-exposure prophylaxis.

The veterinary community has a vital role in protecting the health of our community. Please continue to promote regular rabies vaccinations and educate your clients about rabies.

More information about rabies and maps may be found at hcpbes.org/vph, countypets.com and dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/rabies/.



| January-March 2015 Harris County Rabies Results | | | | |
|---|----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Species | Positive | Negative | Decomposed | Destroyed |
| Bat | 6 | 105 | 4 | 1 |
| Cat | 0 | 73 | 0 | 0 |
| Dog | 1 | 195 | 1 | 0 |
| Opossum | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Otter | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Rabbit | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Raccoon | 0 | 21 | 0 | 0 |
| Skunk | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 7 | 408 | 5 | 1 |

Sources: Department of State Health Services, HCPHES VPH

Inside this issue:

Rabies Surveillance 2
Upcoming Conference 4

Pet Awareness Holidays

- May**
 17-23 National Dog Bite Prevention Week
 24-30 National Hurricane Preparedness Week
- June**
 1-30 American Humane Association's Adopt-a-Cat Month
 26 Take Your Dog to Work Day
- July**
 15 Pet Fire Safety Day
 31 National Mutt Day

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**Zoonosis: any infectious disease that is transmissible
from animals to humans.**

Rabies surveillance at HCPHES - VPH: Highlights since 2013

In January 2015, a dog in the Tomball area (zip code 77037) tested positive for the south-central skunk (SCSK) rabies virus. This was the first reported case of rabies in a dog in Harris County since 1979. As of April 15, 2015, 10 animals with non-negative rabies test results were investigated by HCPHES – Veterinary Public Health (VPH), consisting of: 7 positive bats, 1 positive dog, 1 decomposed dog and 1 decomposed bat. Our surveillance will evaluate changes within VPH data from 2013-2014, January through March 2014-2015 and Department of State Health Services (DSHS) data from Harris County from 1998-2014.

Table 1 shows the difference in the number of bite investigations, rabies testing results and rabies vaccines administered in 2013 and 2014. There was an increase in bite case investigations (6%), rabies positive cases (10%) and rabies vaccine administered (10%) at VPH. The prevalence of rabies was similar between both years (~1.5 – 2%) with 2013 being slightly higher. The prevalence of rabies was also similar throughout Harris County (~1.5%) as depicted on the DSHS website. The amount of destroyed, decomposed or inconclusive specimens were much less in 2014 compared to 2013. This could be because of enhanced awareness in the Harris county community of how to submit rabies specimens, climate changes or other reasons which we have not investigated. The number of submissions did not differ between both years.

Table 1: Comparing bite investigations, rabies testing results and rabies vaccines administered between 2013 and 2014 in HCPHES-VPH.

| | Exposures Investigated | Bite Cases | HTL* Negative | HTL Positive (~% prevalence) | HTL Inconclusive [#] | Rabies Vaccines |
|-------------------|------------------------|------------|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| 2013 | 258 | 2,114 | 460 | 10 (2%) | 14 | 5,709 |
| 2014 | 268 | 2,233 | 460 | 11 (1.5%) | 7 | 6,253 |
| ~ % Change | 4 | 6 | 0 | 10 | -50 | 10 |

HTL* Head to lab submitted to City of Houston lab, testing for Rabies.

HTL Inconclusive[#]: Inconclusive refers to if the specimen was destroyed, decomposed or was not conclusive for rabies (aberrant distribution or morphology of fluorescent antibodies)

We informed the media, the public and health professionals on January 24th 2015 that a dog was positive for rabies in Tomball. Table 2 depicts changes at VPH, with a marked increase of bite case investigations, animals tested for rabies and rabies vaccines administered since the announcement of the rabid dog in Tomball. February 2015 has the highest number of exposures reported (160% increase), head-to-lab (HTL) submissions (87% increase) and rabies vaccines administered (54% increase). There has also been an increase in positive cases of rabies investigated from Jan-Mar in 2015 (n=6) compared to 2014 (n=2) by 200%. The prevalence of rabies in Jan – March 2014 is ~1.9% (2/103) which is less than in Jan – March 2015 which is ~4.3% (6/147). This may also be true in all of Harris County.

Table 2: Comparing bite investigations, rabies testing results and rabies vaccines administered between 2014 and 2015 after dog tested positive for rabies in HCPHES-VPH on January 2015.

| | January | February | March |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 2014 | | | |
| Exposures Investigated | 12 | 10 | 44 |
| Bite Cases | 155 | 145 | 191 |
| HTL* Negative | 29 | 23 | 49 |
| HTL Positive (% prevalence) | 0 | 0 | 2 (0.8%) |
| HTL Inconclusive [#] | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Rabies Vaccines | 399 | 428 | 567 |
| 2015 | | | |
| Exposures Investigated | 10 | 26 | 50 |
| Bite Cases | 147 | 177 | 234 |
| HTL* Negative | 30 | 43 | 66 |
| HTL Positive (% prevalence) | 1 (0.6%) | 1 (0.5%) | 4 (1.3%) |
| HTL Inconclusive [#] | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Rabies Vaccines | 563 | 657 | 651 |
| ~ % CHANGE 2014 vs. 2015 | | | |
| Exposures Investigated | -17 | 160 | 14 |
| Bite Cases | -5 | 22 | 23 |
| HTL* Negative | 3 | 87 | 35 |
| HTL Positive | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| HTL Inconclusive [#] | 0 | 0 | 200 |
| Rabies Vaccines | 41 | 54 | 15 |

HTL* Head to lab submitted to city of Houston, testing for Rabies.
HTL Inconclusive[#]: Inconclusive refers to if the specimen was destroyed, decomposed or was not conclusive for rabies (aberrant distribution or morphology of fluorescent antibodies)

The DSHS rabies website for Harris County depicts the high risk species consistently testing positive for rabies within the last 16 years to be bats followed by skunks. In addition, 2006 had the most specimens submitted for rabies testing (n=1556) and the highest prevalence of rabies (5.38%). These numbers may be a result of the boy diagnosed with rabies in Humble, TX. In table 2, this same trend can be seen for 2015 following the announcement of the rabid dog.

Passive rabies surveillance in Harris County has increased. Some highlights observed from passive rabies surveillance in VPH and Harris County are: 1) an increase in reports of bite cases, exposures and lab submissions at VPH; 2) a marked increase in rabies surveillance in February 2015 following the report of the rabid dog to health professionals and the public; 3) an increase in bite case reports and lab submissions to Harris County in 2006 after a boy tested positive for rabies in 2006.

Please help Harris County continue with vigorous rabies surveillance by reporting bites and scratches in your clinic, reminding clients to keep their pets currently vaccinated against rabies and encouraging clients to keep their animals on a leash to reduce bite incidences.

When in doubt, contact the Harris County VPH zoonosis department to help with rabies risk assessment from potential exposures and rabies surveillance in Harris County.

Reference

Department of State Health Services: <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/rabies/cases/statistics/>

UPCOMING Zoonotic Disease Conference

The **8th Annual Zoonotic Disease Conference** will be held Sunday, September 13, 2015 at Baylor College of Medicine.

This “One Health” conference will feature presentations on Ebola, methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus pseudintermedius* (MRSP) and *Borrelia*.

This year, Harris County investigated the first canine rabies case in the county since 1979, so this year’s conference will also feature a panel discussion on rabies featuring both infectious disease physicians and experienced veterinarians.

Registration is FREE and opens in July! If you would like to be the first to know about it, please make sure to register your email address by contacting Tiffany Guidry at tguidry@hcphe.org.

We look forward to seeing all of you there!



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Thanks for staying in tune!

Harris County
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