

# People's Health

Outcomes • Planning • Evaluation



## Know the Facts: Animal rabies

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Many warm-blooded animals are susceptible to infection by the rabies virus. The virus attacks the central nervous system. If not treated, rabies is always fatal.
- In the United States, rabies primarily affects and is maintained in wildlife populations. Wild animals accounted for 93% of reported cases of rabies in 2014.
- A rabid animal spreads the rabies virus when it bites or scratches another animal or a person, or when the virus in its saliva comes into contact with open wounds, the eyes, nose or mouth.
- Symptoms of rabies infection vary with the species and the stage of the disease. You cannot tell just by looking at an animal if it has rabies.
- From 2003 to 2014, 35 human rabies cases were reported in the United States. In California, 2 cases were reported during 2011-12.

### HEALTHY PEOPLE 2020 GOAL:

Not established.

### SHASTA COUNTY BASELINE:

In 2001-2003, an average of 4 animal rabies cases were reported per year in Shasta County.

### DEFINITION:

Reported number of new cases of rabies infection in animals in Shasta County.

**Average Animal Rabies Cases, Shasta County and California, 2001-2015**

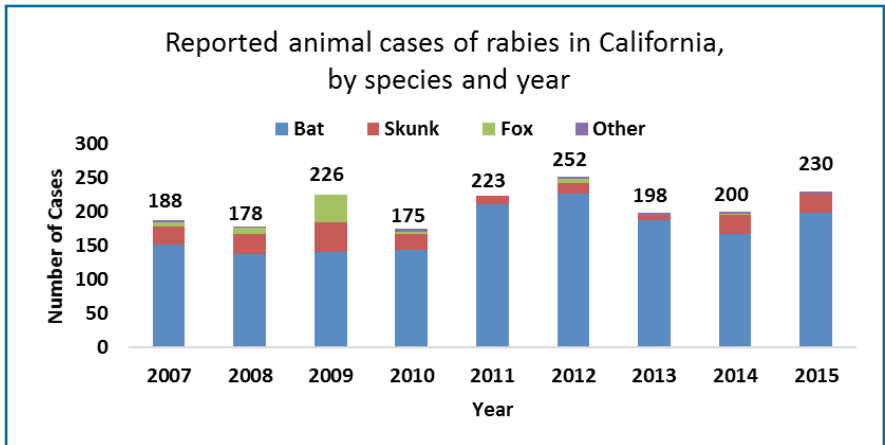
| Year      | Shasta County | California |
|-----------|---------------|------------|
| 2013-2015 | 1             | 209        |
| 2012-2014 | 0             | 217        |
| 2011-2013 | 2             | 224        |
| 2010-2012 | 2             | 217        |
| 2009-2011 | 3             | 208        |
| 2008-2010 | 1             | 193        |
| 2007-2009 | 2             | 197        |
| 2006-2008 | 3             | 187        |
| 2005-2007 | 5             | 197        |
| 2004-2006 | 4             | 196        |
| 2003-2005 | 4             | 201        |
| 2002-2004 | 2             | 217        |
| 2001-2003 | 4             | 263        |

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Find more health information at [www.shastahhsa.net](http://www.shastahhsa.net). Click on "Health and Safety," then "Current Health Concerns." Questions? Email [shastahealthdata@co.shasta.ca.us](mailto:shastahealthdata@co.shasta.ca.us)

## KEY POINTS:

- Animal rabies cases in California from 2001-2015 ranged from a high of 319 (2001) to a low of 175 (2010).
- In 2001, the number of cases in bats and skunks were almost equal, while in 2015, more than 86% of reported species were bats. Only 13% of reported cases were skunks.
- In 2014, raccoons were the most frequently reported rabid wildlife species (30.2% of all animal cases) in the United States, followed by bats (29.1%), skunks (26.3%), foxes (5.2%) and cattle (9.2%). Raccoons get rabies in the eastern United States, but not in California, so far.
- In Shasta County, except for one case of skunk infection in 2007 and 2009, all of the cases during 2007-2015 period were reported in bats.



## PRIMARY PREVENTION ACTIVITIES:

- Educate pet owners about the importance of keeping their pets' rabies vaccinations current.
- Have stray animals removed from areas populated by people, because they may be unvaccinated or ill.
- Avoid contact with unfamiliar and wild animals, and keep pets away from wild animals.
- Avoid animals that could have rabies. Watch for:
  - Wild animals that appear unusually tame and unafraid of people
  - Nocturnal animals that are active during the day
  - Animals that act nervous, aggressive or have excessive drooling or foaming from the mouth
  - Pets that have difficulty walking, eating, or drinking and whose personalities change or voice tone changes
  - Bats unable to fly or that have been caught by a domestic pet
- Vaccinate people who routinely come into contact with domestic and wild animals during the course of their work.
- Encourage people to promptly report any wild-animal-to-domestic-animal bites or animal-to-human bites to animal control (241-2550).

## From the Desk of Andrew Deckert, MD, MPH

Shasta County  
Public Health Officer



Rabies is a fatal disease caused by a virus that is maintained in nature through transmission to wild animals. It is a rare disease in humans in the United States. Most reported animal cases in California and Shasta County in recent years were in bats.

Vaccination of pets, education of public about the reservoirs of infection, the ways of transmission, and the signs of potential rabies in animals are among effective control measures.

If you are bitten, scratched or if any area of broken skin has come into contact with saliva from an animal that might have rabies, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water. Seek emergency medical care immediately, as post-exposure rabies immunization can be life-saving.

***To your health!***