

# ANIMAL RABIES

## ***Did you know?***

- In the United States, rabies primarily affects and is maintained in wildlife populations. More than 93% of the animal rabies cases reported in 2001 were among wild animals.
- In California, the highest number was among bats (52%) followed closely by skunks (47%).
- Many warm-blooded animals are susceptible to infection by the rabies virus which is usually found in the saliva of an infected animal. The virus attacks the central nervous system and the brain. If not treated, rabies is always fatal.
- 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.

## **Definition:**

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

## **Healthy People 2010 Goal:**

Not established

## **Shasta County Baseline:**

- In 1990-1992, an average of 12.3 animal rabies cases were reported per year in Shasta County.

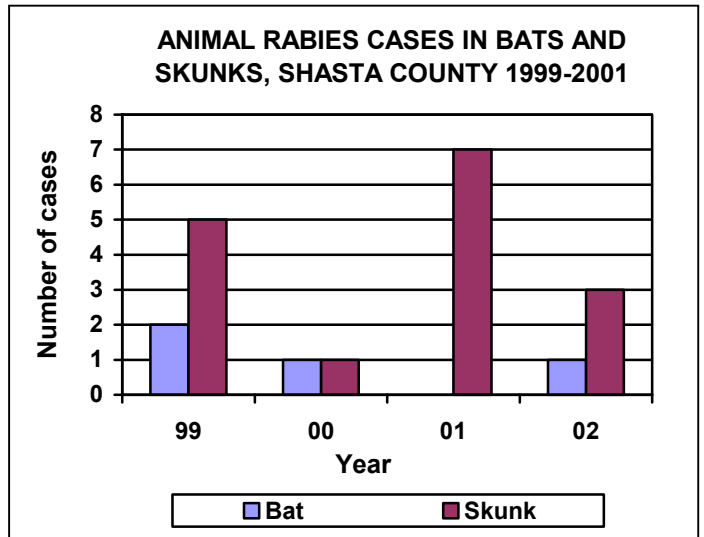
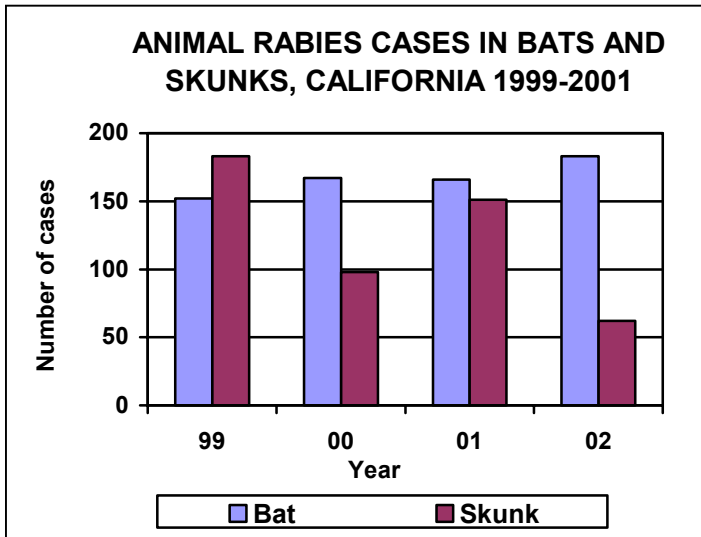
<b>Animal Rabies Cases, Shasta County and California, 1992-2001</b>		
	<b>Shasta County</b>	<b>California</b>
<b>Year</b>	<b>Average Annual New Cases</b>	<b>Average Annual New Cases</b>
1992-1994	10	379
1993-1995	7	351
1994-1996	9	345
1995-1997	11	356
1996-1998	8	357
1997-1999	7	354
1998-2000	5	336
1999-2001*	6	315
2000-2002*	4	282

\* Data are provisional.

# ANIMAL RABIES (continued)

## Key Points:

- In California, most of the cases of animal rabies that occurred during the years 1999-2001 were among bats and skunks.
- Rabies is endemic in Shasta County. Most cases of animal rabies that occurred in Shasta County during the years 1999-2002 were among skunks.
- During the period 2000-2002, there were 3 human cases of rabies in California.
- According to available data, Shasta County has never had a reported case of human rabies.



# ANIMAL RABIES (continued)

## Primary Prevention Activities:

- Educate pet owners about the importance of vaccinating their pets and keeping their pets' rabies vaccinations current.
- Advise dog owners about providers in the community that offer canine rabies vaccination clinics at no charge in excess of actual cost.
- Have stray animals removed from areas populated by people because these animals may be unvaccinated or ill.
- Avoid contact with unfamiliar animals and wild animals, and keep pets away from wild animals.
- Avoid animals that could potentially have rabies. Signs to watch for include the following.
  - Wild animals that appear unusually tame and unafraid of people.
  - Nocturnal animals such as skunks, foxes, or bats, that are active during the day.
  - Any animal that acts nervous, aggressive, or has 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 dog or cat.
- If 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. Contact a physician or seek emergency medical care immediately.
- Vaccinate people who routinely come into contact with domestic and wild animals during the course of their work.
- Encourage medical providers and citizens to promptly report any animal-to-animal bites or animal-to-human bites to animal control authorities in their area.
- Consider rabies vaccination for long-term visitors to countries where rabies infection in dogs is endemic.

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**Data Source:** Shasta County Public Health; California Department of Health Services, Infectious Diseases Branch, Veterinary Public Health Section; California Department of Health Services, Disease Investigation and Surveillance Branch, Surveillance and Statistics Section; and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.