



Rabies in Colorado January 1 - December 31, 2015 Lab Confirmed Rabies Positive Animals

The establishment of endemic rabies in a terrestrial wildlife reservoir, especially in the urban areas, has had enormous public health repercussions. In an effort to identify rabies activity, CDPHE continues to conduct a rabies surveillance project for wildlife showing abnormal behavioral signs of rabies to determine the distribution of skunk rabies in Colorado.

With the risk of rabies being high in wild animals (especially skunks) laboratory-based rabies surveillance is essential for rabies prevention and control. This allows accurate information that will guide human postexposure prophylaxis decisions; determine the management of potentially exposed animals, aid in emerging pathogen discovery and to describe the epidemiology of the disease.

In the 2015 year, 118 animals tested positive for rabies in Colorado (table 1). Of these, 66 (56%) rabid animals were known or strongly suspected of exposing 85 domestic animals and 39 humans.

It should be noted that more testing was being done in the Boulder, Larimer, and Weld County areas due to a USDA funded enhanced surveillance project. This resulted in more complete ascertainment of rabies virus in these areas compared to other parts of the state. The project concluded at the end of 2015.

Figure 1:
Rabies by Month 2015

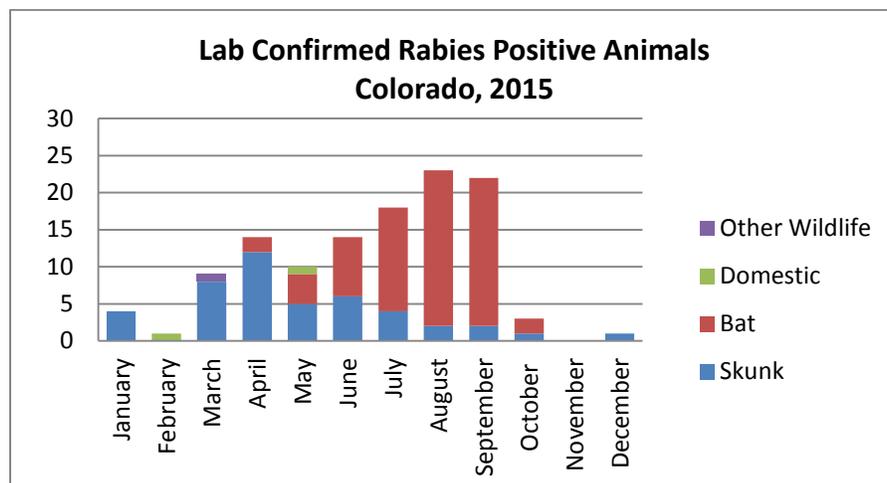


Table 1:

County	Bat	Skunk	Other Wildlife	Domestic	Total
Adams	1	6			7
Alamosa	1				1
Arapahoe	5	8			13
Archuleta	1				1
Boulder	7	18	1-raccoon		26
Custer	1				1
Denver	8				8
El Paso	5			1-cat	6
Elbert		3		1-cat	4
Gunnison	1				1
Jefferson	7				7
Kit Carson		1			1
La Plata	2				2
Larimer	14				14
Otero	1				1
Pitkin	1				1
Pueblo	8				8
Saguache	1				1
San Miguel	1				1
Teller	1				1
Weld	5	8			13
Yuma		1			1
Total	71	45	1	2	119

Although the last human case of rabies in a Colorado resident was in 1931, rabies in terrestrial wildlife increases the risk of spillover into domestic animals and livestock, which increases the risk to humans. No cure exists for rabies once symptoms appear. Preventive medication is available for people known or suspected to have been bitten by a rabid animal. It is critically important for people bitten or scratched by a wild animal or an unfamiliar animal to contact their health care provider.