



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Date: 23 June 2025
To: NC Health Departments, Animal Control Agencies, and Veterinarians
From: Carl Williams, DVM, DACVPM, State Public Health Veterinarian
Subject: 2025 Rabies Updates & Reminders

Introduction

Rabies is endemic among wildlife in NC and continues to pose a risk to the health of people and animals throughout the state. In 2024, over 3,600 animals were tested for rabies at the [NC State Laboratory of Public Health](#) (NCSLPH) (Figure 1), and of these, over 6% were rabies-positive (Figures 2-3).

Figure 1: County-level rabies specimen submission rates, NC, 2024.

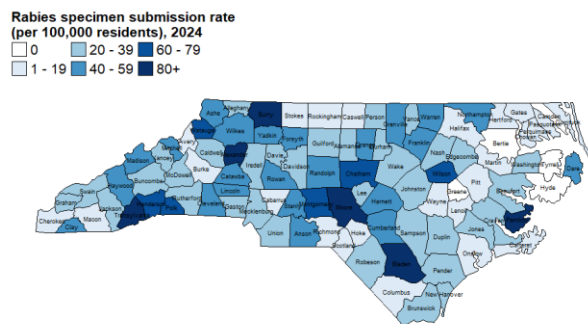


Figure 2: Number of rabies-positive specimens by county, NC, 2024.

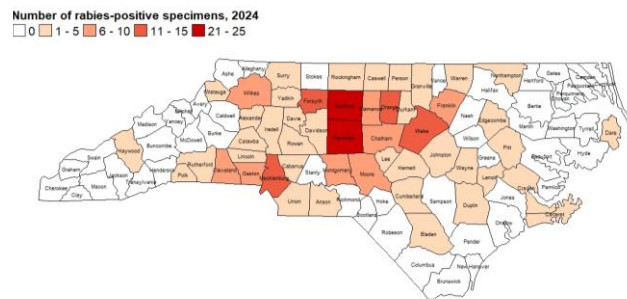
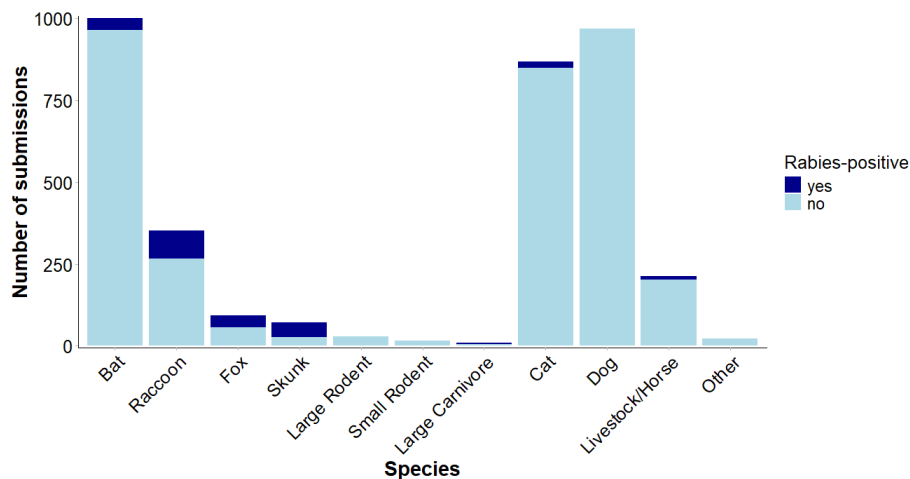


Figure 3: Rabies submissions and test results by species, NC, 2024.



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Comprehensive information about rabies epidemiology, laws, and control measures can be found in the [NC Rabies Manual](#). The purpose of this memo is to provide information on recent frequently asked questions related to rabies.

Certified Rabies Vaccinator Program

In NC, all dogs, cats, and ferrets are [required by law](#) to be vaccinated against rabies. Rabies vaccines may be administered by a licensed veterinarian, a registered veterinary technician under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian, or a certified rabies vaccinator (CRV). CRVs are appointed by the local health director and must receive prior approval from the Veterinary Public Health (VPH) office to take the required training webinar. The purpose of the CRV program is to increase access to rabies vaccination in counties where licensed veterinarians are not available to participate in county rabies control clinics. **Therefore, we recommend that persons appointed to be CRVs only be city or county employees involved in public health or animal control.** Rabies vaccines administered by CRVs are valid for only one year from the date of vaccination, regardless of the labeled duration of the vaccine. Per state law, CRVs are **only** authorized to administer rabies vaccines; administration of other vaccines may result in disciplinary action.

Exotic and Hybrid Animals

There is no state law or administrative rule prohibiting the ownership non-native wildlife, including exotic animals (e.g., non-human primates) and hybrid animals (e.g., wolf-dog hybrids, Savannah cats), as pets [with few exceptions](#). However, ownership of exotic or hybrid animals may be restricted or prohibited by local ordinances. There is no rabies vaccine that is labeled for use in exotic or hybrid animals. However, rabies vaccines may be administered off-label to these animals at the discretion of a licensed veterinarian. **In NC, exotic and hybrid animals are regarded as wild animals for the purposes of rabies prevention and control.** In the event that an exotic or hybrid animal bites or otherwise potentially exposes a person or domestic animal to rabies, a confinement period may be implemented at the discretion of the State Public Health Veterinarian, considering the animal's health status, rabies vaccination history, and likelihood of exposure to rabies. However, the State Public Health Veterinarian may also recommend that the animal be humanely euthanized and tested for rabies. If an exotic or hybrid animal is exposed to rabies, euthanasia is recommended due to the lack of a known incubation period for rabies in these animals, which hinders the implementation of an appropriate quarantine period.

Rabies Testing

Rabies testing is performed by the NCSLPH. Animals will only be tested for rabies if they have potentially exposed a human or domestic animal (pet or livestock) to rabies, or if a veterinarian suspects rabies based on their clinical evaluation of an animal. Small animals must be humanely euthanized and decapitated, and only the head is submitted to NCSLPH for testing. **Livestock and horses should not be submitted directly to NCSLPH. Instead, submit heads or carcasses to a NC Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, where the brain will be removed and submitted to NCSLPH.**