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News Release

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Rabies in Wildlife Continues to Pose Risks to Pets, People

Columbus, OH – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) wants to remind Ohioans that rabies in wildlife continues to pose a risk to pets and people. Rabies is almost always 100 percent fatal once a person or animal begins to show symptoms. Protecting pets by keeping them current on their rabies vaccine is an important buffer between wildlife rabies and human exposure. Indoor animals should also be vaccinated as rabid bats are frequently discovered by pets in the home.

Over the past two decades, ODH laboratories have confirmed two dogs and seven cats with rabies. The most recent dog report occurred on Oct. 13 when it was confirmed that a Siberian Husky from Twinsburg Ohio in Summit County was infected with rabies. The dog has since died and was not current on its rabies vaccination.

“Although this is only the second confirmed dog case in Ohio since 1997, the risk of household pets coming into contact with wild animals is ever present,” said State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Kathleen Smith, who oversees the ODH Zoonotic Disease Program. “We highly recommend that all domestic pets be kept up to date on vaccinations.”

So far this year, 43 animals have been confirmed rabid in Ohio (32 bats, 5 raccoons, 5 skunks, and one dog). With the exception of bats, all were infected with the raccoon variant. ODH continues to work with local health departments and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services to contain raccoon rabies and prevent further spread.

In addition to vaccinating your pets for rabies, there are several things Ohioans can do to protect themselves and their pets.

- Avoid wildlife and animals you do not know.
- Teach your children that they should tell you if they were bitten or scratched by an animal.
- Call your doctor and the local health department, if bitten.
- Contact your veterinarian if your pet was exposed to a bat, raccoon, skunk, or other wild carnivore.

It is important to remember that cats, as well as dogs, should be vaccinated for rabies. According to the latest published data by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cats continue to be the number one domestic animal confirmed with rabies: 300 cats confirmed in 2009 compared to 81 dogs.

Learn more on the [Rabies page](#) of the ODH website: www.odh.ohio.gov.