

# 2024 Rabies Surveillance Report

## March 2025

[Rabies](#) is a deadly viral disease of the brain primarily spread through bites from infected animals. In Vermont, rabies is most commonly found in wild animals such as raccoons, skunks, foxes, bats and woodchucks. Cats, dogs and livestock can also get rabies if they have not been vaccinated for rabies. The Vermont Department of Health Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program tracks and responds to rabies virus in animals. Throughout the year, the Vermont Department of Health Laboratory tests animals that may have exposed humans or domestic animals to rabies. With this information, the Department of Health can provide appropriate postexposure recommendations to Vermonters and their animals.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact [ahs.vdhpubliccommunication@vermont.gov](mailto:ahs.vdhpubliccommunication@vermont.gov).

### 2024 Rabies Testing by the Numbers

- **838 total animals tested**
- **66 rabid animals**
- **8% positive**

## Rabies Testing Results

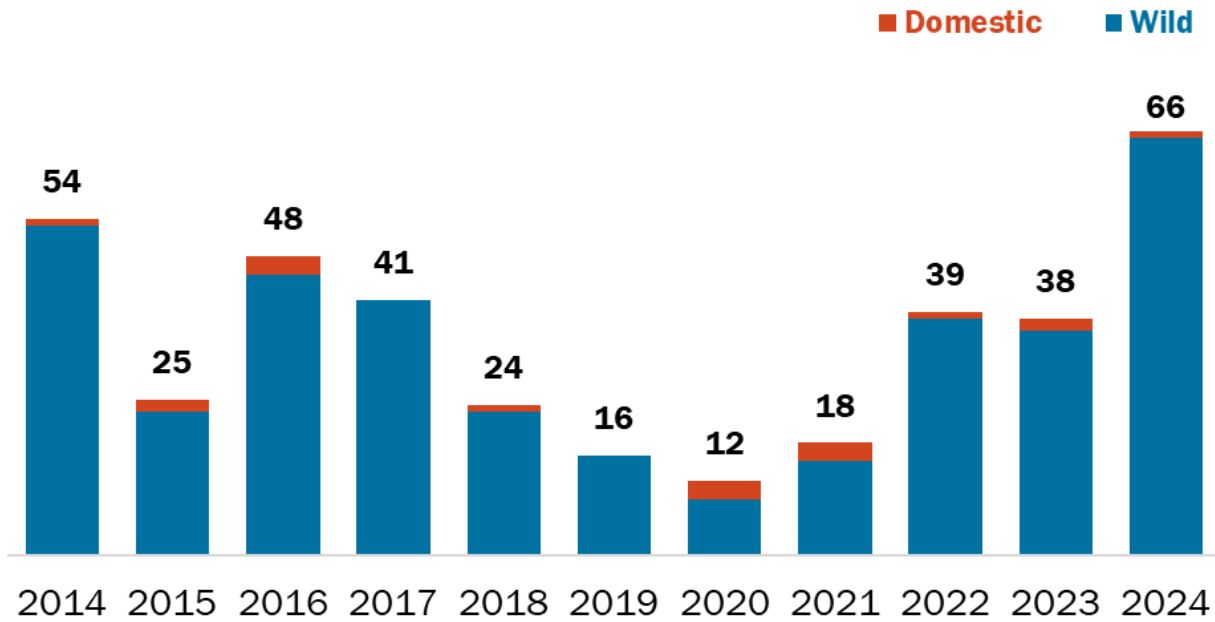
- 838 animals from 176 towns across Vermont were tested.
- 66 (8%) animals were positive: 37 raccoons, 15 skunks, 10 foxes, 2 woodchucks, 1 bobcat, and 1 domestic rabbit. This is the first known rabid rabbit reported in Vermont.
- This is a 74% increase from 2023 confirmed positives (66 vs. 38) and a 69% increase from the fifteen-year average of 39 rabies cases reported in Vermont since 2010.
- Most rabid animals were collected from Chittenden County (15; 23%), Caledonia County (14; 21%), and Franklin County (13; 20%) due to an increase in rabies cases in northern Vermont.
- Animals with the highest positivity rates were rabbits (1/1; 100%), woodchucks (2/6, 33%) foxes (10/32; 24%), and raccoons (37/329; 11%).
- Raccoons and skunks were tested most frequently, 329 and 188 animals, respectively.



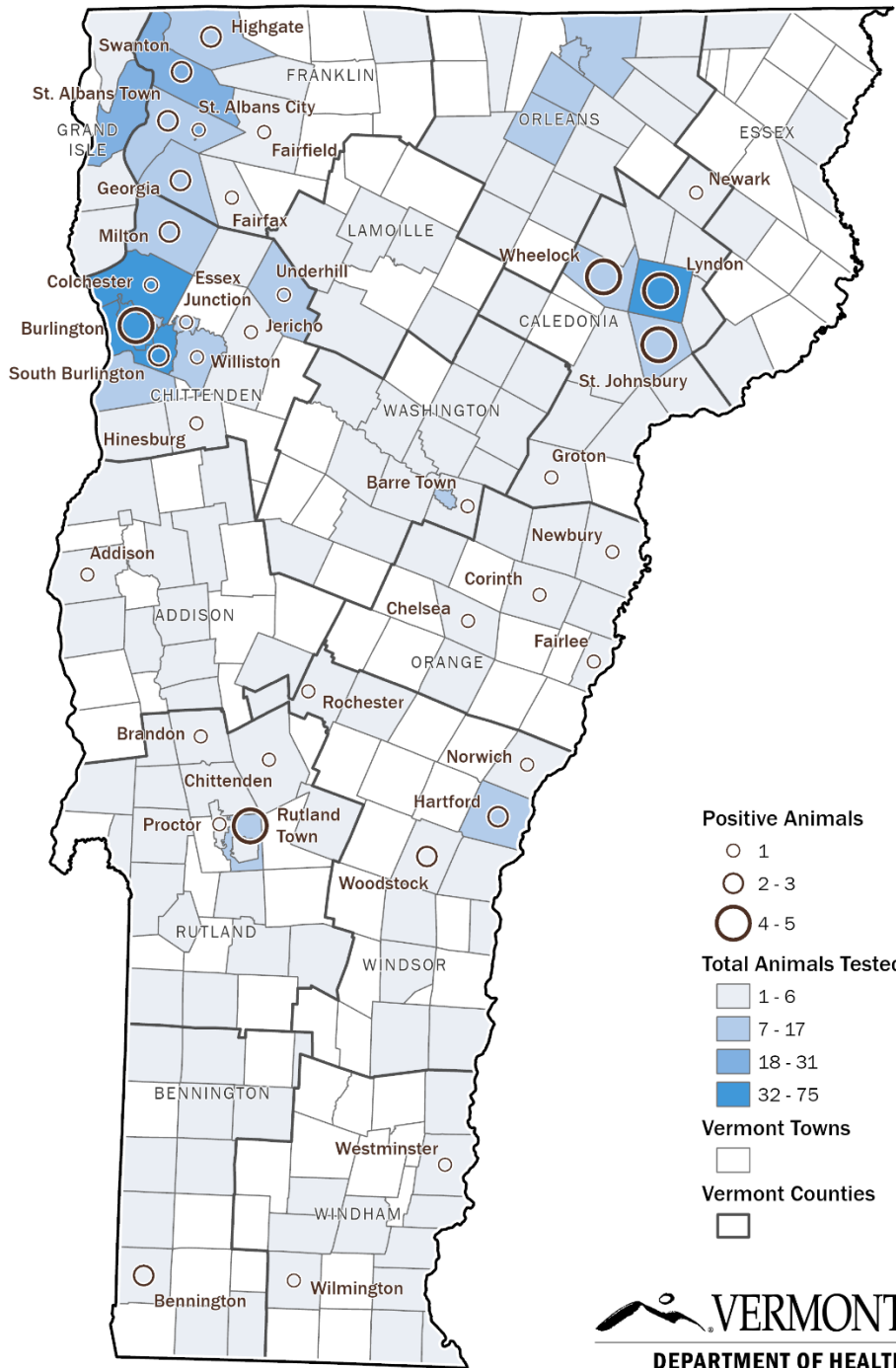
**HealthVermont.gov**  
**802-863-7200**



Rabies is increasing in Vermont. Most cases of rabies are in **wild animals**, and 66 animals tested positive for rabies in 2024.



**Animals from throughout the state were tested for rabies in 2024, and 66 were positive for rabies, mostly from Chittenden, Franklin, and Caledonia Counties.**



## Rabies Postexposure Prophylaxis Surveillance

[Rabies Postexposure Prophylaxis \(rPEP\)](#) is a treatment that is highly effective in preventing human rabies following exposure to rabies virus. This involves wound care and a series of injections given by a medical provider.

Decisions to start rPEP are based on [type of exposure](#), the [animal type, whether the animal is available for testing](#) or monitoring, and the [geographic location](#) where the exposure occurred.

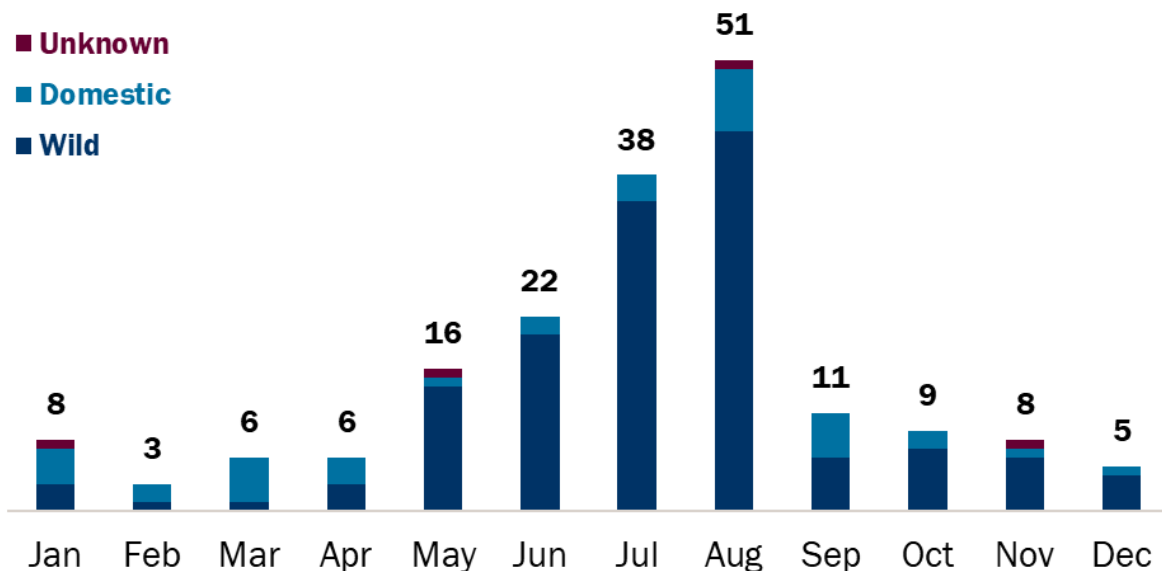
Health care providers should call the Vermont Department of Health at 802-863-7240 prior to administering rPEP for an exposure risk assessment consultation.

Health care providers must report the administration of rPEP by faxing a completed [Rabies Postexposure Prophylaxis Report Form](#) to the Health Department's Epidemiology Program at 802-951-4061 or securely e-mailing it to [AHS.VDHEpiLabRabies@vermont.gov](mailto:AHS.VDHEpiLabRabies@vermont.gov).

### rPEP Surveillance Results

- In 2024, health care providers reported 183 administrations of rPEP in Vermonters.
- rPEP was administered most commonly for exposure to bats (n=105; 58%), followed by raccoons (n=22; 12%), dogs (n=21; 12%), and cats (n=14; 8%).
- The median age of patients who received rPEP in 2024 was 36 years (range: 1–87 years); 60% were female.

**In 2024, rPEP was given most frequently during summer months following exposure to wild animals, mostly bats.**



## Key Takeaways

Rabies is a threat in Vermont. To protect yourself and your family, remember these tips:

- If an animal bites you or your pet, contact your health care provider or veterinarian for medical assistance.
- Do not touch or pick up unfamiliar or wild animals – even baby animals – or try to feed them or make them into pets.
- While only a small percentage of bats are infected with rabies, they are the leading cause of human rabies in the United States. If you find a bat in a room where a person or pet is sleeping, call the **Vermont Rabies Hotline at 1-800-4-RABIES**. Do not release the bat, and only try to capture it if you can do so without getting bitten.

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**Rabies is a deadly virus primarily spread through the bites of wild animals. If you have had contact with a suspect rabid animal, call the Vermont Rabies Hotline at **1-800-4-RABIES (1-800-472-2437)**.**

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