

Links

For more information on rabies in North America, please follow these links:

Canada

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

<http://inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/disejala/rabrag/rabrage.shtml>

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Rabies/STEL01_129680.html

New Brunswick Department of Health

<http://www.gnb.ca/0053/rabies/index-e.asp>

Nova Scotia Department of Health,
Promotion and Protection

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/cdpc/rabies.asp>

Quebec Government (In French)

<http://www.rageduratonlaveur.gouv.qc.ca/index.asp>

USA

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/rabies

Image Credit: "Rabies Variants in the United States" was obtained from the CDC www.CDC.gov/rabies/epidemiology.html

For more information, please contact the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, your local veterinarian or the Animal Health Division.

Other information pamphlets are available online from the Department of Natural Resources at:

www.nr.gov.nl.ca/agric/

Publication: DS 04-017
Last Revised: March 2010



Newfoundland
Labrador

Rabies in North America

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What is Rabies?

Rabies is a deadly viral disease of the brain spread by the bite of infected mammals. Across North America, there are numerous different types (variants) of this virus which are spread by very specific kinds of animals. In this province, it is most commonly seen in Labrador, where red and arctic foxes are responsible for its spread. In addition to this fox variant, we have had one reported case on the island of Newfoundland and one in Labrador that came from a bat.

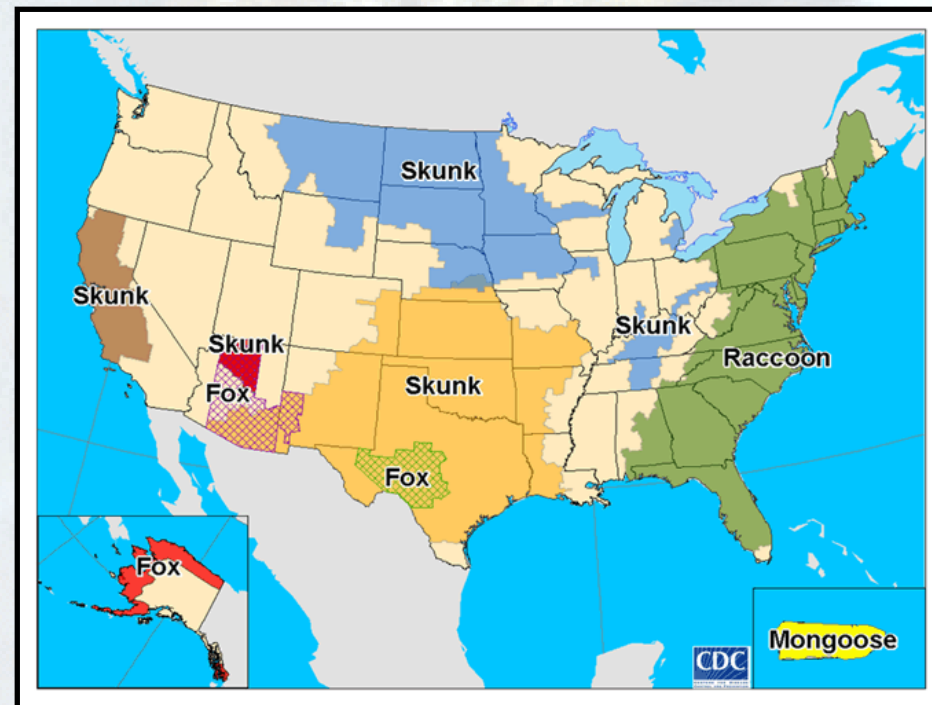
These different variants will be discussed in this pamphlet with emphasis on the increasing importance of the raccoon variant to Canada.

The Known Variants in Canada and the United States

In Canada and the United States, there are numerous known variants of the rabies virus in land-dwelling (terrestrial) mammals. All of these cause the same disease and are a threat to any mammal they bite. However, the disease only persists as a reservoir within its own species or those closely related.

These terrestrial variants include:

Animal	Name of Variant	Region
Skunk	South Central	Southern plains
	North Central	Northern plains south into U.S.
	California	California
Dog	Dog/Coyote	South Texas
	Sonora Dog	Texas
Fox	Gray Fox	Texas & Arizona
	Arctic Fox	Canada, Alaska, New England
Raccoon	Raccoon	Eastern U.S., Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick



Rabies Variants in the United States

There are also numerous bat variants including the Silver-Haired Bat variant and Big Brown Bat variant. Their distribution across North America is less well understood. It is generally considered that wherever the actual bat species is, there will also be a threat of them carrying the virus. The different bat variants are the most common source for human rabies in North America.

Raccoon Rabies

This particular variant was established in the southeastern US, particularly Florida, prior to 1950. In 1977, a new outbreak occurred in West Virginia presumably due to the movement of Florida raccoons to West Virginia for hunting purposes.

Since the 1970's, it has established itself throughout eastern US and has crossed into Canada in southern Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick.

It is not known how much further the raccoon variant will spread. This will depend upon the availability of habitat and control measures to reduce or eliminate this disease. As this province has no current raccoon population, there is a low risk of it entering and establishing itself. Raccoons do live in Cape Breton, however, and are able to travel undetected on vehicles so individual animals could cross over. In September 2002, a raccoon traveled from Nova Scotia to near St. John's in a closed container showing that such movement is possible.