

Rabies Positive Cat

On November 13, 2018, the Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian received notification of a pet domestic cat testing positive for rabies. This nine-year-old, indoor-outdoor cat was born and lived on a farm near Longview. The cat displayed extreme aggression and bit the owner and the owner's son. This prompted them to seek medical attention, and rabies post-exposure prophylaxis commenced immediately.

There were four other cats and two dogs on the property that are now all under a three-month quarantine. Those animals have also been given post-exposure rabies vaccinations.

Subsequently, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has also completed variant typing and it is most consistent with the bat variant of the virus. Cats hunting bats is not an abnormal scenario and with the small percentage of bats that are positive for rabies in Alberta, having an unvaccinated cat positive for rabies can occur.

In terms of other recent non-bat detections in Alberta, the last two locally acquired cases occurred in cats in 2010 and 2006. In 2013, there was also a puppy in Calgary that originated from Nunavut that tested positive with the arctic fox variant.

So far in 2018 we have also had nine bats test positive for rabies through scenarios in which they interacted with pet dogs, pet cats or directly with humans. These positive bats have been from all over Alberta, which is not surprising given that bats are present in rural and urban areas and move freely throughout the province.

Even though rabies does occur at a low rate in our province, it is important to remember that only through vaccination of our pets can we protect their health and in turn, human health. This case also serves as an important reminder to ensure that the veterinary team working with animals monitors their protective titres and updates their vaccination status as needed. Please contact your local Public Health office for more information regarding this aspect.