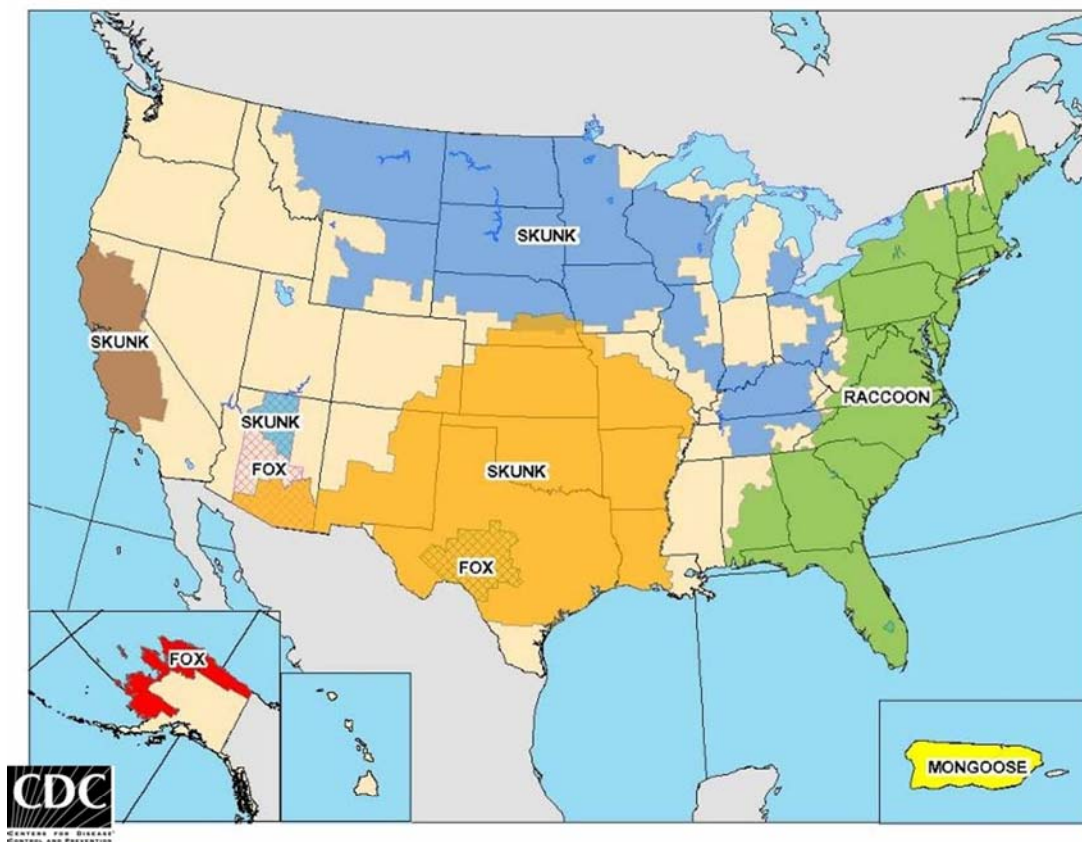


Rabies

Rabies is a Class A Disease and must be reported to the state within 24 hours by calling the phone number listed on the web page.

Rabies virus, a rhabdovirus, causes acute encephalitis in all warm-blooded hosts, including humans. The case fatality rate is generally considered to be 100 percent. All species of mammals are susceptible to rabies, but only a few species are considered important reservoirs, such as bats, skunks, raccoons, foxes and coyotes. Most of these reservoirs harbor specific variants of the virus in distinct geographic locations. One or two cases of human rabies are reported annually in the United States. In the U. S., less than ten percent of reported cases occur in domestic animals or pets.

Figure 1. Animal reservoirs for rabies in the United States



Skunk variant rabies and several bat variants of the virus are endemic in Louisiana. The cases reported in Louisiana reflect these predominant virus variants (skunk and bat). No active surveillance for wildlife rabies is consistently conducted in Louisiana; therefore, the number of cases reported does not reflect the actual ecology of the virus in the state.

During the 1970’s and 1980’s, the number of reported rabies animal cases progressively decreased from 60 to 70 cases per year to 20 cases per year. (Table 1)

Table 1: Distribution by species and year - Louisiana, 1970 - 2009

| Species | 70 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Skunk | | 4 | 14 | 17 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 17 | 15 | 33 |
| Fox | 51 | 42 | 18 | 20 | 3 | | | | | |
| Bat | 5 | 1 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| Dog | 9 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 5 | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Cat | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| Horse | | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Coyote | | 2 | | | 3 | | | | | |
| Raccoon | | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Wolf | 2 | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Cattle | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Bobcat | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 69 | 60 | 50 | 52 | 24 | 7 | 8 | 23 | 17 | 43 |
| Species | 80 | 81 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 85 | 86 | 87 | 88 | 89 |
| Skunk | 16 | 16 | 21 | 23 | 46 | 15 | 21 | 11 | 8 | 9 |
| Fox | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bat | 3 | 15 | 10 | 6 | 12 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 11 |
| Dog | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | |
| Cat | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Horse | | | | 2 | | | | | | |
| Total | 20 | 33 | 32 | 34 | 61 | 21 | 25 | 13 | 13 | 22 |
| Species | 90 | 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 |
| Skunk | 26 | 7 | 3 | 13 | 59 | 48 | 11 | 2 | | 2 |
| Bat | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 10 | 14 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Fox | | | | 1 | 3 | | | | | |
| Dog | | | | | 4 | | 1 | 2 | | |
| Cat | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Horse | | | 2 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Raccoon | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| Cattle | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| Total | 27 | 8 | 10 | 17 | 78 | 64 | 16 | 7 | 3 | 7 |
| Species | 00 | 01 | 02 | 03 | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 | 08 | 09 |
| Skunk | 11 | 5 | 2 | 1 | | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | |
| Bat | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Dog | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| Cat | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Horse | | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 | | |
| Raccoon | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cattle | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 14 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 |

In the early 1970’s there were many cases reported among dogs and foxes, but rabies in these species was rarely reported after 1975. (Figures 2 & 3). The first case of rabies reported in a dog in over ten years, a dog infected with the southern skunk variant, was reported from Jefferson Davis Parish in 2007. The first case reported in a cat in over ten years, a cat infected with the skunk variant, was reported from Iberia Parish in 2009. (Figure 3)(Table 1) These recent cases in pet species serve as a reminder of the importance of vaccinating pet dogs, cats and ferrets for rabies.

Figure 2. Rabies cases in animal species - Louisiana, 1970-1989

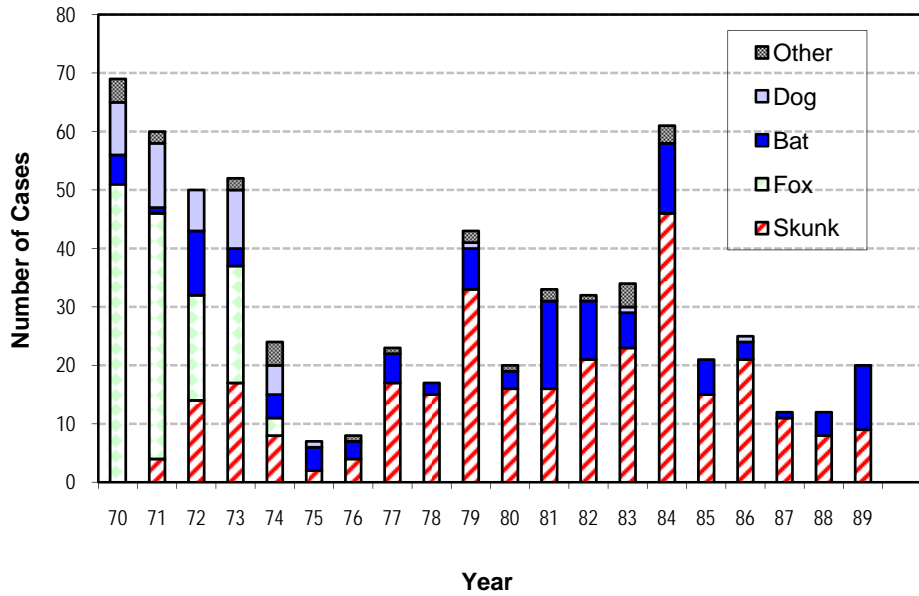
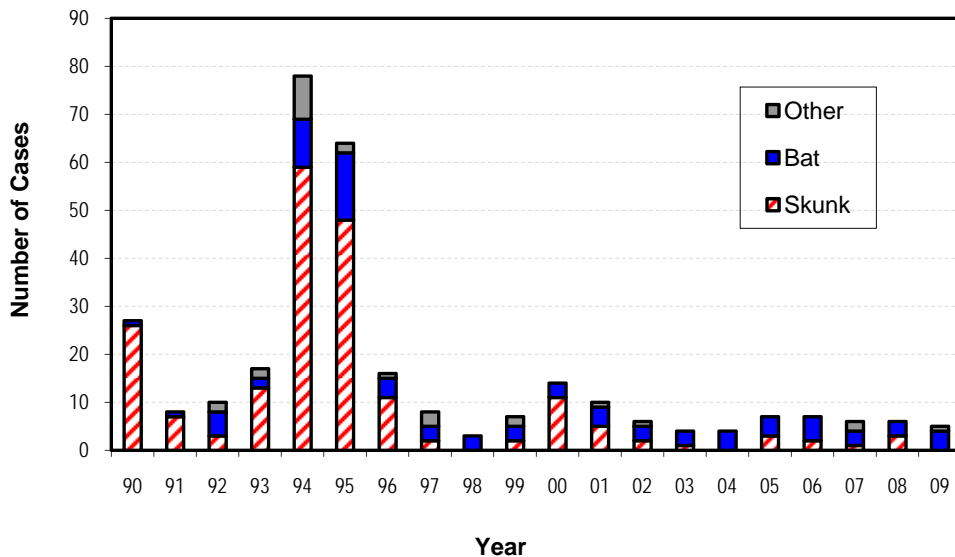
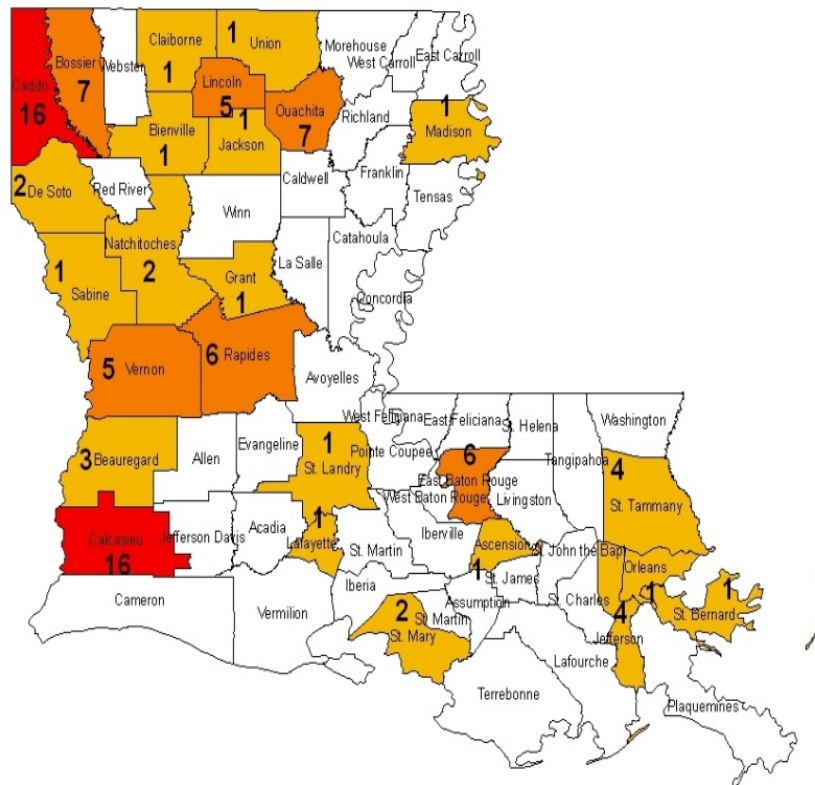


Figure 3. Rabies cases in the most common reservoirs - Louisiana, 1990-2009



The geographical distribution of the disease varies according to species. Bat rabies is predominant in the western and northern part of the state. However, it is important to note that this variant occurs throughout the entire state. (Figure 4)

Figure 4. Bat rabies - Louisiana, 1990-2009



Skunk variant rabies is present west of the Mississippi River in north Louisiana and west of the Atchafalaya River Basin in south Louisiana. Two intense foci of skunk variant rabies, one in the northwest area of the state centered in Caddo and Bossier Parishes and a second in south central Louisiana centered in Lafayette Parish, are indicated in Figure 5. The comparatively high number of cases in Lafayette Parish in all probability reflects periods of active surveillance over the past 19 years. These periods of active surveillance occurred following increased reporting of cases through routine passive surveillance.

Figure 5. Skunk rabies - Louisiana, 1990-2009

