



Bob Wise
Governor

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

ORAL RABIES VACCINATION PROGRAM MEMORANDUM



Paul L. Nusbaum
Secretary

To: West Virginia Active Rabies Surveillance Counties and Interested Parties
From: West Virginia Oral Rabies Vaccination Program
Date: May 16, 2001
Re: April 2001 Active Rabies Surveillance Project Update

Project Updates

Raccoon Rabies Found in Nicholas and Webster Counties - Active raccoon rabies surveillance has been officially underway in 20 West Virginia counties for three months now, and raccoon rabies was identified in Webster and Nicholas counties in April. A positive skunk was also identified in Webster County in March, but the strain type has not yet been identified. Active surveillance should be intensified in these areas to determine where additional cases might be located, in the event that the bait drop occurs in these counties.

Raleigh County Added Back to Active Surveillance Area - Raccoon rabies was first identified in Raleigh County in January 2001. Due to budgetary reasons, the active surveillance region was located to the west of this county beginning in February. However, it is important to determine where additional cases might be located in this area, so Raleigh County has been added back to the surveillance region, based on CDC guidance. Even without funding to do so, the Beckley-Raleigh County Health Department submitted brainstem specimens for testing during February and March, and health department personnel should be commended for their efforts.

Coyotes Added as Surveillance Specimens - Based on advice from the CDC, we are alerting counties in the active surveillance area that coyotes will also be accepted as surveillance specimens.

CDC Conducted Site Visit in April - Personnel from the CDC conducted a site visit to West Virginia from April 11 to April 20 to assess surveillance activities and give recommendations for improvement of surveillance. The CDC traveled to different locations in the active surveillance area and talked to personnel from 18 local health

departments, the Department of Agriculture, Division of Natural Resources, Division of Highways, animal control, veterinarians, and other local agencies that are assisting with surveillance.

One issue that arose at many of these meetings was that the subrecipient agreements have not yet been sent to local health departments. We anticipate being able to send these contracts in the very near future. Another issue was that we have not yet provided GPS units to counties to collect latitude and longitude. These units have now been purchased and will be distributed as soon as possible. Nearly all counties have also been trained on manual collection of this data. If any counties need assistance with gathering latitude and longitude, we encourage them to contact our office. Vaccine was requested by two counties, and this has been shipped.

The most common issue discussed at these meetings was that of finding enough surveillance specimens. The more successful counties seem to be those that are partnering with other local agencies to increase submissions. These counties were also informing and educating the general public about the program. We will continue to highlight public awareness activities in this memorandum to assist local health departments with these efforts.

Rabies on WVPHA Conference Agenda

Dr. Cathleen Hanlon, Veterinary Medical Officer at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will be speaking on rabies at the June 13 West Virginia Public Health Association Regional Conference, which is being held at the Day's Inn at Flatwoods. An overview of rabies in West Virginia will be presented at 1:15 p.m., with Dr. Hanlon's lecture immediately following. We encourage rabies coordinators from the 20 active surveillance counties to attend this meeting. A pre-registration

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fee of \$15 is due by June 7. Please send this fee, along with your name, telephone number, address, place of employment, and section affiliation to WVPFA, c/o Jane Young, Treasurer, PO Box 11635, Charleston, WV 25339-1635.

April Data and Data Completeness

After adding Raleigh County to the surveillance area and adding coyotes as surveillance specimens, February data remains unchanged at six submissions. March data, however, reflects a total of 29 submissions, 20 of which contained latitude and longitude coordinates, for a completeness rate of 69%. April data reflects a total of 28 specimens, 19 of which contained latitude and longitude coordinates, for a completeness rate of 68%. Two of the April submissions tested positive.

To increase data completeness, local health departments should report latitude and longitude on all surveillance specimens sent to the state lab, regardless of whether the head or a brainstem sample was sent. Additionally, Regional Epidemiologists and District Sanitarians have been training counties in their regions to provide latitude and longitude readings on positive specimens across the state.

Safety Issue Regarding Scalpels

A question has been raised regarding the necessity of cleaning scalpels between performing back-to-back brainstem removals. The short answer is that scalpels should be cleaned to prevent cross-contamination of specimens. Many brainstem removal kits provided to local health departments may have contained disposable blades on a reusable handle. Personnel performing the brainstem removal should exercise caution when working with these tools to prevent personal injury. At the recommendation of the CDC, we are purchasing completely disposable scalpels to be used during brainstem extraction to eliminate the possibility of cross-contamination and further reduce the possibility of personal injury. These disposable scalpels will be provided to local health departments as soon as possible.

Public Awareness Activities

Allen McCroskey at the Webster County Health Department submitted a Log of Public Awareness Activities that are too numerous to list here! Allen has distributed an active surveillance poster to area post offices, campgrounds, grocery stores, and the local landfill, as well as visited or talked to the fire department, dog warden, sheriff's office, Division of Highways supervisor, conservation officer, the Extension Office, and the County Commissioner. He has also kept in contact with the local newspaper, television station, and radio station to inform the public about active surveillance and provide an update regarding the positive skunk and raccoon found in Webster County. Early rabies vaccination clinics were provided at various locations throughout the county on May 5.

Allen is willing to discuss any of these public awareness activities with other counties who may need some pointers or guidance in this area. He can be contacted at (304) 847-5483.



May We Suggest. . .?

Many post offices employ highway contract or rural route mail carriers who travel throughout the area every day. These mail carriers could keep a daily lookout for roadkill specimens and contact the local health department if any are found. So *Go Postal* and inform your Postmasters and mail carriers about the active surveillance project! (Thanks to Allen McCroskey for providing this suggestion.)

WEST VIRGINIA ACTIVE RABIES SURVEILLANCE - APRIL 2001								
Number of Satisfactory Specimens Submitted and Completeness of Data								
County	Raccoons Tested	Skunks Tested	Foxes Tested	Coyotes Tested	Total Tested	Total With Complete Data	Percent Completeness	Total Pos.*
BOONE	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0
BRAXTON	2	0	0	0	2	2	100%	0
CALHOUN	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0
CLAY	0	1	0	0	1	1	100%	0
DODDRIDGE	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0
FAYETTE	3	0	0	0	3	0	0%	0
GILMER	1	0	0	0	1	0	0%	0
KANAWHA	2	0	0	0	2	1	50%	0
LOGAN	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0
MINGO	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0
NICHOLAS	4	0	0	0	4	4	100%	1
PLEASANTS	1	0	0	0	1	0	0%	0
RALEIGH	3	0	1	0	4	2	50%	0
RITCHIE	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0
ROANE	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0
TYLER	3	0	0	0	3	3	100%	0
WEBSTER	3	1	0	0	4	4	100%	1
WIRT	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0
WOOD	2	0	1	0	3	2	67%	0
WYOMING	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0
TOTAL	24	2	2	0	28	19	68%	2

*Nicholas County raccoon and Webster County raccoon tested positive