

[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 tracks and responds to rabies virus by testing animals that may have exposed humans or domestic animals to rabies. With this information, the Health Department can provide appropriate postexposure recommendations to Vermonters and their animals.

**2022 Rabies by the Numbers**

Total Animals Tested

**615**

Rabid Animals

**39**

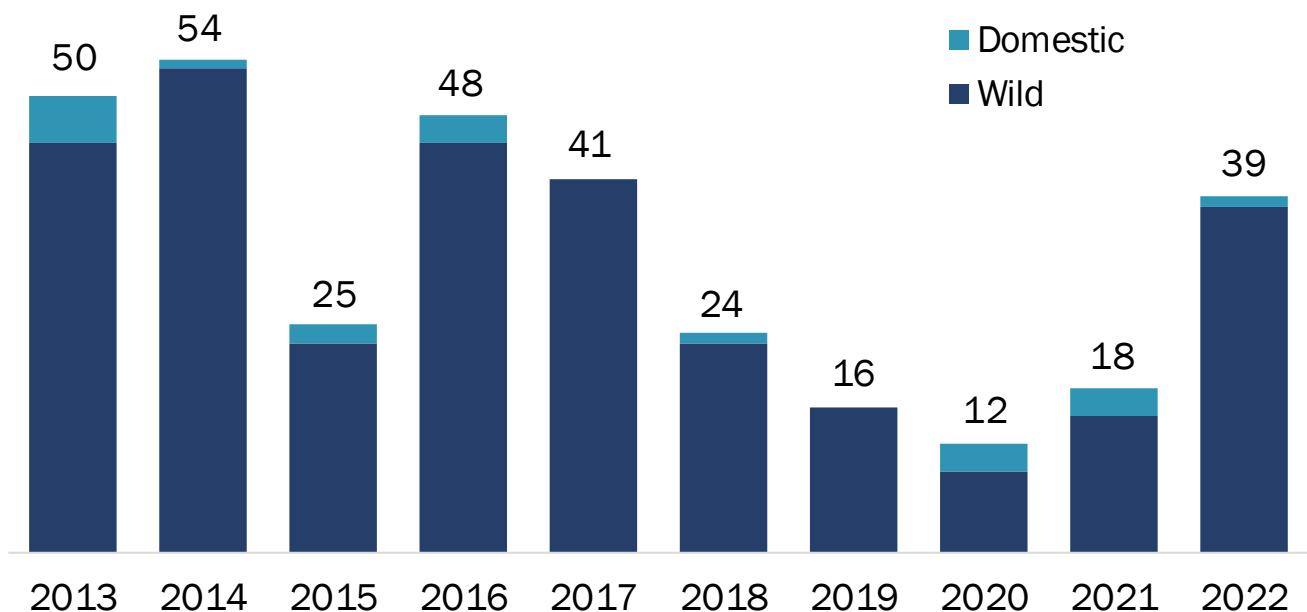
Percent Positive

**6.3%**

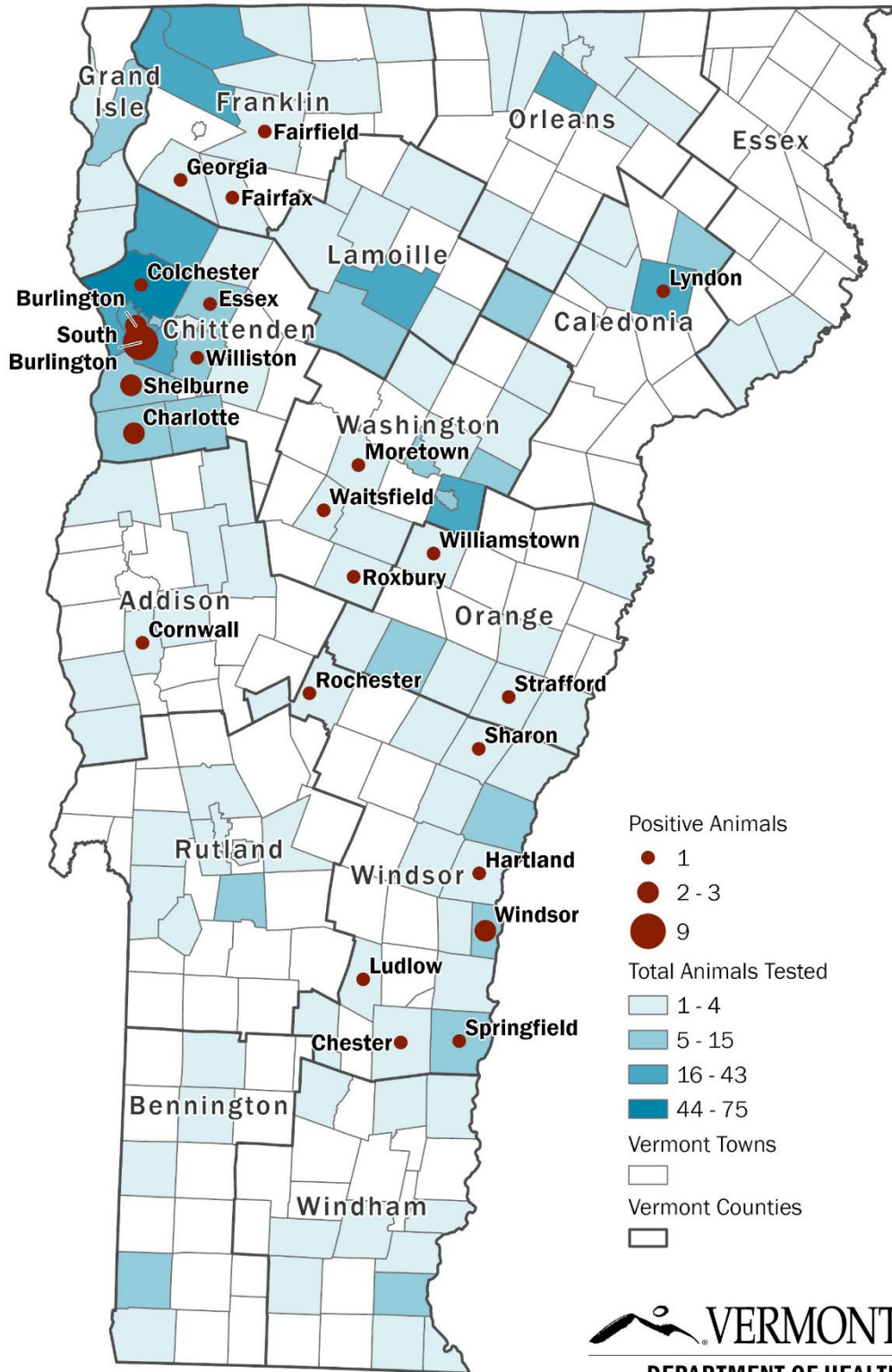
## Rabies Testing Results

- 615 animals from 127 towns across Vermont were tested at the Health Department Laboratory
- 39 (6.3%) animals tested positive: 18 raccoons, seven bats, nine skunks, three foxes, one bobcat, and one goat
- 21 of 39 (54%) rabid animals were collected from Chittenden County due to a localized outbreak
- Animals with the highest positivity rates were bobcats (1/1; 100%), goats (1/6; 16.7%), foxes (3/24; 12.5%), raccoons (18/216; 8.3%), and bats (7/118; 5.9%)
- Raccoons and skunks were tested most frequently, 216 and 159 animals, respectively

**Most cases of rabies are in wild animals, and in 2022 there was a 105% increase in rabies cases from the previous year.**



**Animals were collected throughout the state in 2022, and 39 tested positive for rabies; 21 (54%) were from Chittenden County**



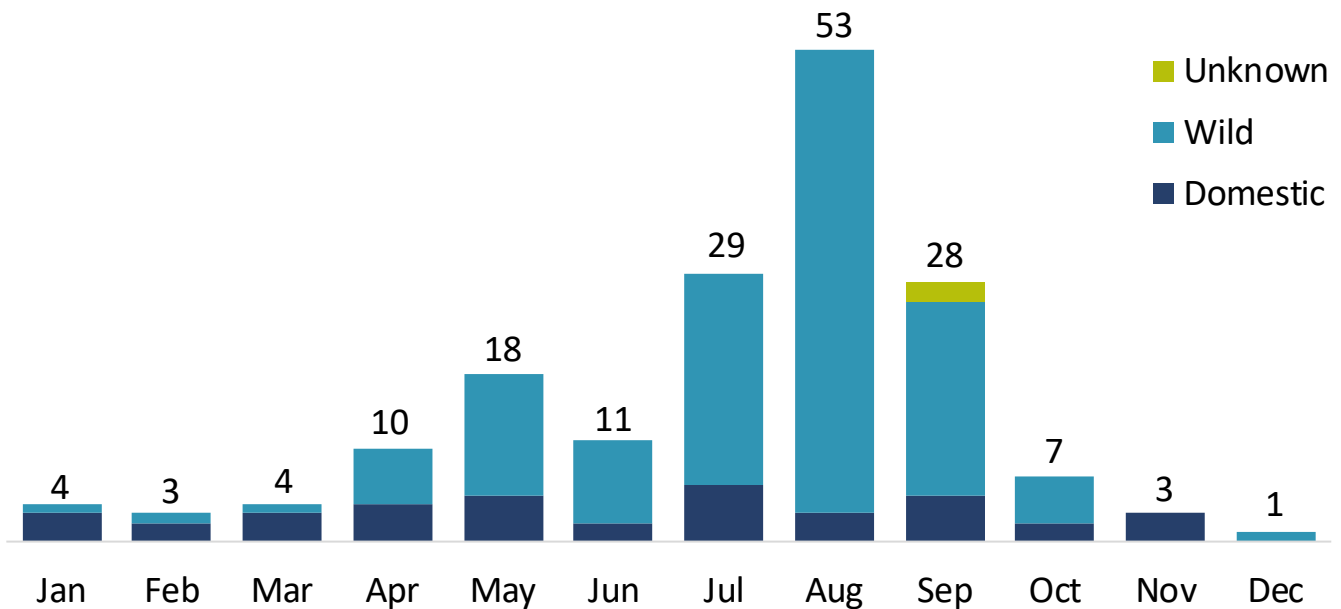
### Rabies Postexposure Prophylaxis Surveillance

[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](#), and the geographic area where the exposure occurred.

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).

- In 2022, health care providers reported 171 administrations of rPEP in Vermonters
- rPEP was administered most commonly because of exposure to bats (n=108; 63.2%), followed by dogs (n=26; 15.2%), raccoons (n=11; 6.4%), and cats (n=11; 6.4%)
- The median age of patients receiving rPEP in 2022 was 35 years (range: 6 months–80 years); 58.5% were female

**In 2022, rabies postexposure prophylaxis (rPEP) was administered more frequently during summer months following exposure to wild animals.**



## 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 was 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

**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)**