

Rabies

Public Health's Role in Rabies Prevention

Presented by:

Anthony Habjan, Director of Environmental Health,

Joe DeGiuli, Manager, Environmental Health

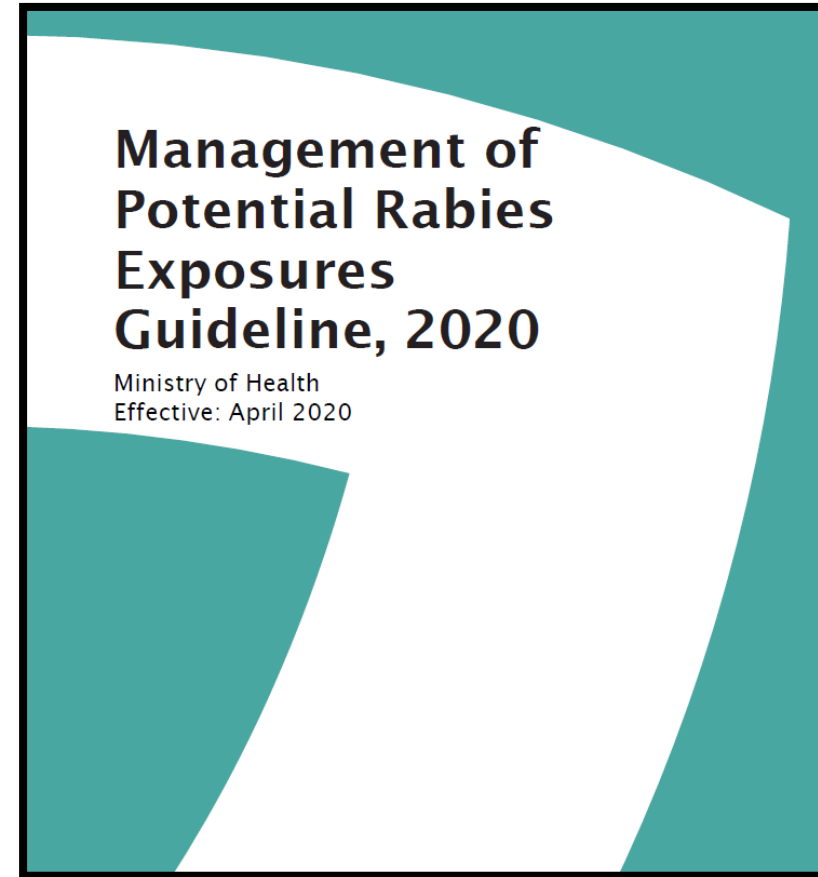
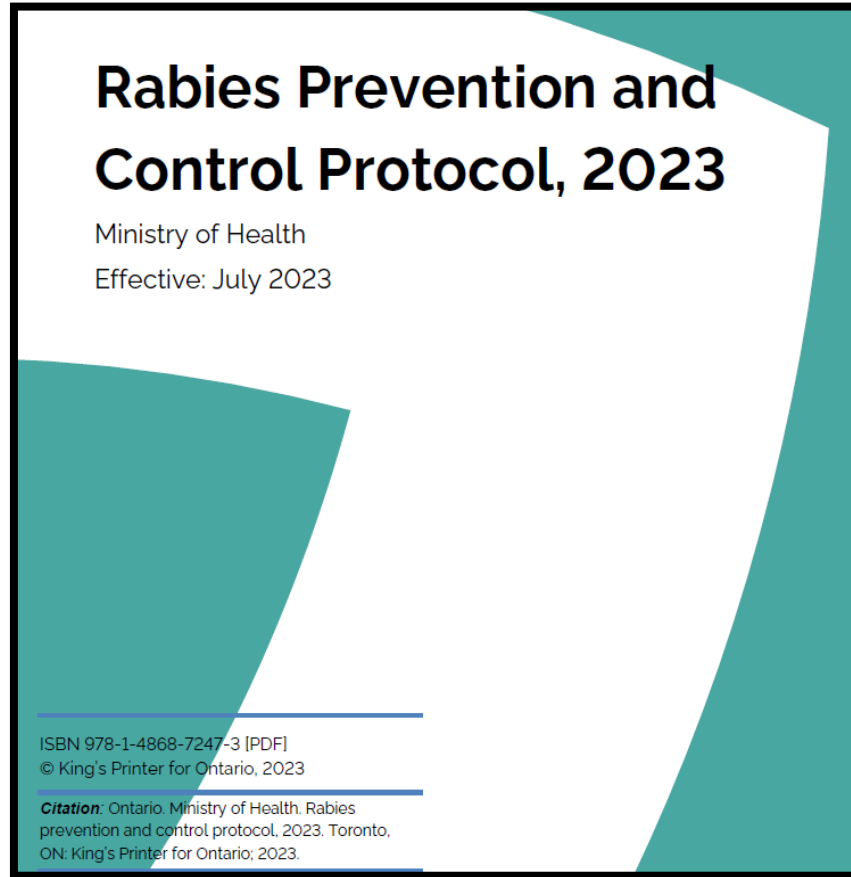
The Public Health Unit's Role

Public Health Programs in Ontario have three main focuses:

1. Prevention
2. Case Management
3. Education

Mandates and authorities for Public Health Units are provided under Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act

Rabies – Act, Regulations & Protocols



What is Rabies?

- Rabies is caused by a virus found in the saliva of infected mammals.
- Rabies can infect any mammal, including humans, pets, wildlife, and livestock.
- Rabies is spread through the bite or scratch of an infected animal or by getting infected saliva in the mouth, nose, or eyes

Rabies cannot be transmitted through contact with blood, urine, or feces

1. Raccoon is bitten by a rabid animal.

2. Rabies virus enters the raccoon through infected saliva.

3. The virus incubates in the raccoon's body for approx. 3 - 12 weeks. No signs of illness during this time.

4. When the virus reaches the brain, it multiplies rapidly, passes to the salivary glands. Signs of illness begin to show.

5. The raccoon can now spread the virus through its saliva.



Recent Human Cases in Canada

- Rabies kills 59,000 people worldwide yearly (WHO, 2025).
- Rabies transmission to humans in Canada is rare, however, once symptoms appear, it is fatal.
- Since 1967, there has been no domestically acquired case of human rabies, however, in 2024 a child in Ontario died from local bat exposure.

Positive Rabies Cases (Animals)

Year	Bat Strain Ontario	Bat Strain Niagara	Raccoon Strain Ontario	Raccoon Strain Niagara	Total Rabies Cases
2022	37	1	23	23	60
2023	49	1	6	6	55*
2024	Pending	6	0	0	Pending

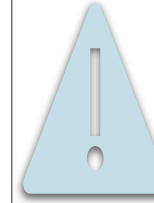
NRPH&ES's Animal Exposure Process



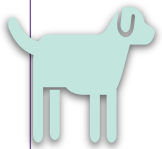
1. Initial Report



2. Client Follow-up



3. Risk Assessment



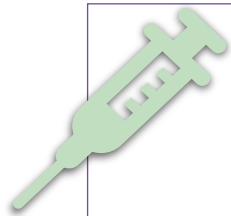
4. Animal Investigation



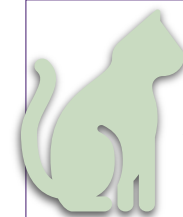
5. Animal Release



6. Vaccination Status Verification



Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Recommendation



Animal Testing

Total Bite/Scratch Investigations in Niagara

Year	Number of Investigations
2019	1460
2020	1206
2021	1290
2022	1280
2023	1266
2024	1385

Program/Operational Challenges

- Increasing Number of Investigations
- Time/Resources
- Public Awareness
- Lack of Rabies Awareness
- Socioeconomic Barriers

Cost of Rabies Vaccine



Rabies vaccine: \$25 - \$40



Examination fee: \$50 - \$100



Total cost: \$75 - \$140

Innovative Solutions/Operational Changes

1. Risk Assessment Tool/Technology
2. Education and Awareness Campaigns
3. Partnerships with Local Agencies
4. No-Cost Rabies Vaccination Clinic

No-Cost Rabies Vaccination Clinics

June 2024, we partnered with VCA Animal Hospitals:

- Vaccinated 175 + animals
- Provided free pet food and kitty litter
- Collaborated with Community Services to engage clients
- Collected and provided food donations

