

## Rabies Cases Dropped in 2005

**There were just 76 reported cases of pet dogs contracting the disease in the United States.**

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The number of reported rabies cases dropped in 2005, according to a new report appearing in the Dec. 15 Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

There were 6,417 reported cases of animal rabies in the United States and Puerto Rico in 2005, according to the report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The number represents a 6.2 percent decrease from the 6,836 cases reported to the CDC in 2004. There was one case of rabies in a human being in 2005, down from eight reported cases in 2004.

Rabies continues to affect wildlife much more than it does domestic animals: wild animals, especially raccoons, skunks, bats and foxes, accounted for more than 92 percent of all rabies cases in 2005, the report states.

Veterinarians and public health officials, however, are reminding pet owners that the only way to avoid rabies in domestic animals is to vaccinate against the virus. Vaccinating dogs and cats is the most effective method of controlling the disease, which attacks the nervous system and is almost always fatal once symptoms occur.

According to the CDC, there were 76 reported cases of rabies in dogs last year, compared with 269 cat-related cases.

Jesse Blanton, an epidemiologist at the CDC, said cats have more interactions with wildlife, where they are prone to being bitten by a rabid animal, and they aren't getting the vaccinations they need.

"Our general belief is that people are doing a good job vaccinating their dogs, but not their cats. We have controlled canine rabies through the vaccination of domestic dogs. It does work," Blanton said.

The simple act of vaccinating a pet, Blanton said, provides protection to the animal and the humans with whom it may come in contact.

To view the CDC rabies report, visit <http://avmajournals.avma.org/doi/pdf/10.2460/javma.229.12.1897>