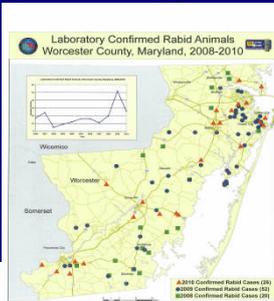


The Worcester County Rabies Experience



Deborah Goeller, R.N., M.S.
Worcester County Health Officer
Janet Tull, R.S.
Worcester County Rabies Coordinator



Worcester County Health Department

1

Outline

- Background
- Upsurge of rabies cases in the County
- Rising public health concerns
- Strategies/Outreach
- Rabies Advisory Committee
- Short-Term Results
- Long-Term Goals

Worcester County Health Department

2

Worcester County Background

- Eastern-most county in Maryland
- Mostly rural with the exception of Ocean City and three small incorporated towns
 - County contains Pocomoke River State Park, Assateague National Seashore, State Forest Lands
- 40 miles long by 30 miles wide
- Year round population of 50,000 swells to 350,000 with vacationers in the summer
- Bordered by Delaware to the north, Virginia to the south, Wicomico and Somerset counties to the west.
 - Creates the need for multi-jurisdiction collaboration



Environmental Health

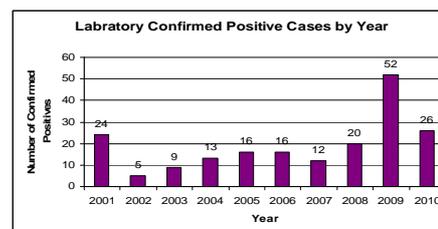
- Small staff (2) responsible for animal bite and rabies exposure investigations, along with other duties such as food, pools, body piercing, etc.
 - Responsibilities include exposure screening, specimen collection and submission to lab, quarantines/isolation of pets, outreach, and related follow-up
- Local Animal Control assists when necessary with investigations, impounds, and enforcement
 - Worcester County- 3 Officers
 - Ocean City- 2 Officers
- Staff on call 24/7

Worcester County Health Department

5

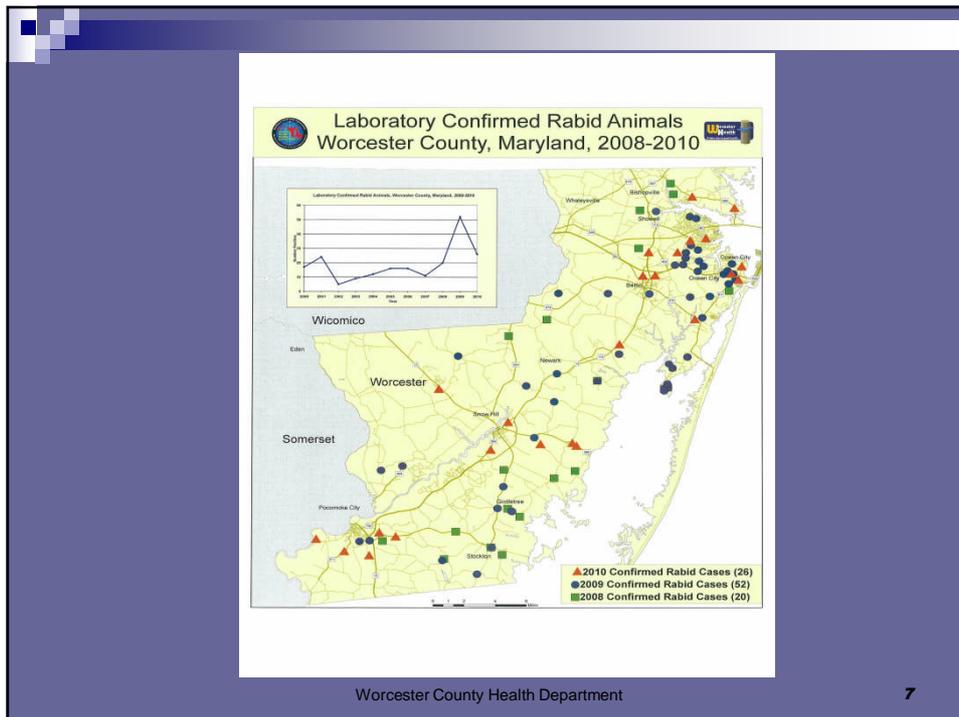
Historic Rabies Data

- Epidemic of raccoon rabies on the east coast did not reach the County until 1993
- County average was 60 rabies investigations with 10-15 confirmed positives per year before 2008, as well as approximately 200 domestic animal bite investigations per year



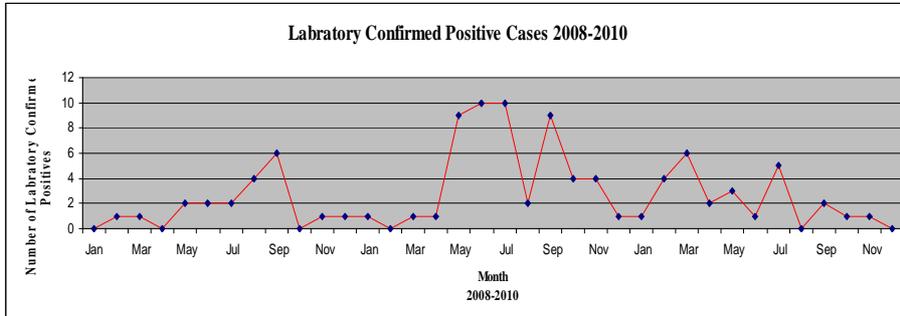
Worcester County Health Department

6



Rapid Increase in Cases

- Beginning in August of 2008 case investigations began increasing rapidly
- Numerous pet contacts and some direct to human exposures
- January through July - 8 confirmed positives total; in August and September alone, 10 additional positives



Worcester County Health Department

9

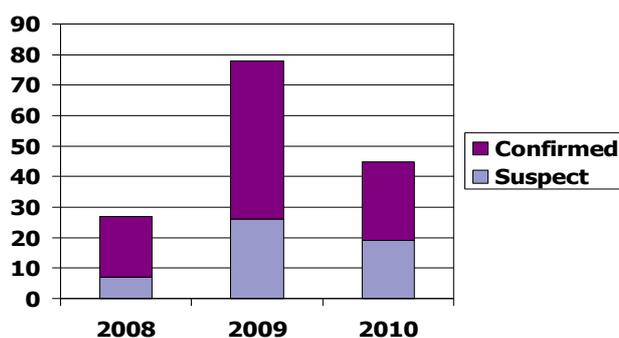
Rapid Increase in Cases cont.

- Not all suspect rabid animals were able to be tested, staff began keeping a list of suspect cases
- Increase in man-hours devoted to the Rabies program, required a shift of priorities
- The number of investigations continued to increase
 - 2008- 85
 - 2009- 150
 - 2010- 175

Worcester County Health Department

10

Confirmed and Suspect Rabid Animals



Worcester County Health Department

11

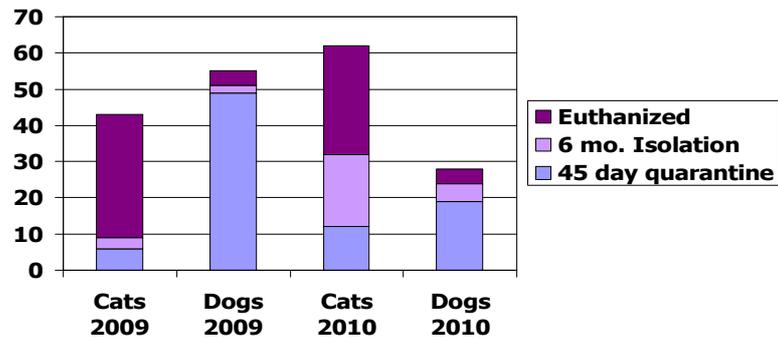
Rising Public Health Concerns

- Poor vaccination rates of County owned pets resulting in high numbers being euthanized/6 month isolation
 - 2009 data from investigations showed that only 44% of pets had current vaccinations
 - 42% of dogs were unvaccinated/expired
 - 68% of cats were unvaccinated/expired
- Over the course of eight months there were 3 rabid cats
- Feral and semi-feral cat colonies were being maintained by cat rescuers in the County
- Recognized need for improved communication between HD and first responders
- Lack of general public and partner agency knowledge about rabies and prevention measures

Worcester County Health Department

12

Pet Impacts from Rabies Exposures



Worcester County Health Department

13

Strategies to Address Rising Public Health Concerns

- Community Awareness and Support
- Vaccination
- Collaboration/Education
- Outreach
 - Specific
 - General

Worcester County Health Department

14

Community Awareness and Commissioner Support

- April 6, 2010 Presentation to Worcester County Commissioners
 - Current status of rabies
 - Six areas for action
 - Input and approval to proceed

Call to Action

- Increase public awareness and education.
- Review existing animal control ordinance.
- Enhance investigation and enforcement by animal control.
- Develop a plan for control of feral and semi-feral cat populations.
- Additional animal vaccination clinics.
- Secure needed financial and manpower resources.
- Creation of Worcester County Rabies Advisory Committee.

Rabies in the News

- “Commissioners to study recommendations regarding rabies control,” *Ocean City Today*, Aug. 6, 2010.
- “County Rabies Advisory Report calls for enhanced measures,” *Maryland Coast Dispatch*, Aug. 6, 2010.
- “Ambitious anti-rabies programs on hold,” *Worcester County Times*, Aug. 5 2010.
- “Vaccines, advisories knock down rabies cases,” *Worcester County Times*, Feb. 1, 2011.
- “Rabid raccoon found in Worcester County, first case of 2011,” *Ocean City Today*, Feb. 11, 2011.
- Featured multiple times in County Commissioners’ column in Worcester County Times.
- Public health announcements on radio and WBOC, WMDT.

Worcester County Health Department

17

Rabies Advisory Committee

- Commissioners authorized the formation of the committee
 - Members included Health Department, Animal Control, Sheriff’s Office, Veterinarians, Dr. Feldman, local cat rescue groups, and the County Attorney and PIO
- Met from April-July 2010 to formulate recommendations in the action areas
- Explored oral rabies baiting vaccination program (Anne Arundel County)
- Presented recommendations to the Commissioners in August 2010

Worcester County Health Department

18

Rabies Vaccinations

- Investigations were not closed until all pets on a property were currently vaccinated
 - Non-compliant cases were forwarded to the local Animal Control for citations
- Additional low-cost rabies vaccination clinics were scheduled in more areas
- Magnets designed to be handed out at clinics as visual rabies vaccination reminders



**IF YOU LOVE ME
VACCINATE ME!**



Pet's Name: _____ **Next Rabies Vaccination Due By:** _____



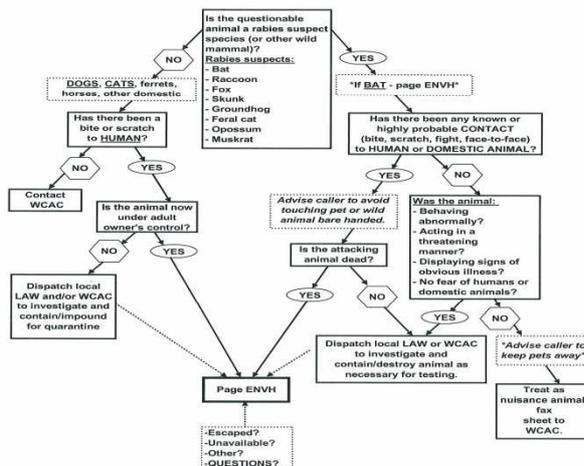
**Contact Your Vet -OR-
for Rabies Clinic Info call:**
410-641-9559
410-632-1340

Multi-Agency Collaboration

- Met with various agencies to discuss rabies exposure protocols
 - Local Animal Control, Law Enforcement/Dispatchers, National & State Park Staff, Campgrounds
- Developed an algorithm to help partners distinguish between nuisance calls and possible rabies exposures
- Rabies Resource Manuals were distributed to Veterinarians
 - Provided education for veterinary staff about rabies exposures and prevention measures
 - Rabies laws and regulations
 - Provided brochures and posters

ENVH = Environmental Health pager
 LAW = Local Law Enforcement
 WCAC = Worcester County Animal Control

ANIMAL RELATED CALLS



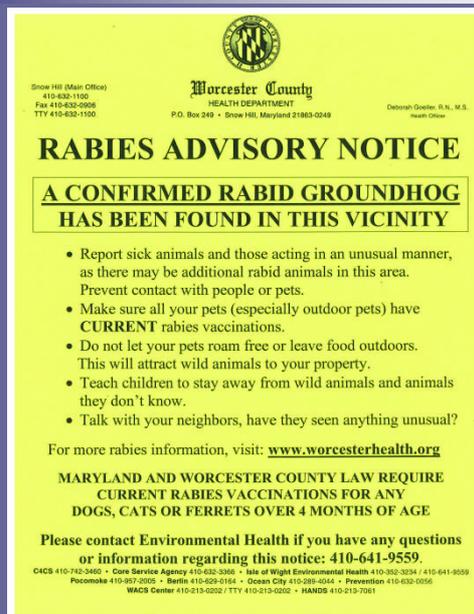
Outreach

■ Specific

- Rabies advisories were distributed in the areas surrounding confirmed and suspect rabies cases
- In one case, reverse 911 was utilized for an investigation of a confirmed rabid stray cat

■ General

- Press releases were distributed to the media to advise the public of rabid animals and methods for risk reduction
- Weekly lists of confirmed positive and suspect rabid animal locations were made available to the public and faxed to veterinarians
- Prevention Office distributed educational material to libraries and at community events
- Health Department and Animal Control's websites were revised to include:
 - Rabies information and reporting procedures
 - The laws requiring rabies vaccination
 - Rabies vaccination clinic advertisements



The poster is yellow with black text. At the top center is the Worcester County seal. Below it, the text reads "Worcester County HEALTH DEPARTMENT" and "P.O. Box 249 • Snow Hill, Maryland 21863-0249". To the left, contact information for Snow Hill (Main Office) is listed: "410-632-1100", "Fax 410-632-0906", and "TTY 410-632-1100". To the right, it says "Delorain Quillen, D.V.M., M.S. Health Officer". The main heading is "RABIES ADVISORY NOTICE" in large, bold, black letters. Below this, a box contains the text "A CONFIRMED RABID GROUNDHOG HAS BEEN FOUND IN THIS VICINITY". A bulleted list follows, providing instructions on reporting sick animals, preventing contact, vaccinating pets, and teaching children. At the bottom, it provides the website "www.worcesterhealth.org" and the phone number "410-641-9559".

Snow Hill (Main Office)
410-632-1100
Fax 410-632-0906
TTY 410-632-1100

Worcester County
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
P.O. Box 249 • Snow Hill, Maryland 21863-0249

Delorain Quillen, D.V.M., M.S.
Health Officer

RABIES ADVISORY NOTICE

**A CONFIRMED RABID GROUNDHOG
HAS BEEN FOUND IN THIS VICINITY**

- Report sick animals and those acting in an unusual manner, as there may be additional rabid animals in this area. Prevent contact with people or pets.
- Make sure all your pets (especially outdoor pets) have **CURRENT** rabies vaccinations.
- Do not let your pets roam free or leave food outdoors. This will attract wild animals to your property.
- Teach children to stay away from wild animals and animals they don't know.
- Talk with your neighbors, have they seen anything unusual?

For more rabies information, visit: www.worcesterhealth.org

MARYLAND AND WORCESTER COUNTY LAW REQUIRE
CURRENT RABIES VACCINATIONS FOR ANY
DOGS, CATS OR FERRETS OVER 4 MONTHS OF AGE

Please contact Environmental Health if you have any questions
or information regarding this notice: **410-641-9559**

CDCS 410-742-3900 • Care Services Agency 410-632-3395 • State of Wight Environmental Health 410-382-3234 • 410-641-9559
Pocomoke 410-957-2025 • Berlin 410-629-0164 • Ocean City 410-289-4034 • Prevention 410-632-0256
WACD Center 410-213-2222 / TTY 410-213-2222 • HANDS 410-213-7061

Short-Term Results

- Increased vaccination enforcement
 - Failure to vaccinate cases turned over to Animal Control
 - Dogs currently vaccinated increased to 71% in 2010; Cats currently vaccinated only increased to 35% in 2010
- County Commissioners authorized more rabies vaccination clinics
 - 4/yr historically; 7 held in 2010: 12 planned for 2011
- Better communication established with Law Enforcement/Animal Control partners providing enhanced investigation and faster response times for the public, preventing pet exposures
- Increased reporting of exposures by veterinarians, especially wounds of unknown origin

Long-Term Goals

- Enhance enforcement of current vaccination/licensing laws in order to achieve higher percentages of currently vaccinated pets, especially cats
- Continue additional low cost vaccination clinics
- Address feral cat colonies
 - Greater awareness of risks of feral cat colonies
 - Better education for cat rescuers on rabies risks
- Better education of veterinary clients on the importance of keeping current rabies vaccinations



Questions?