



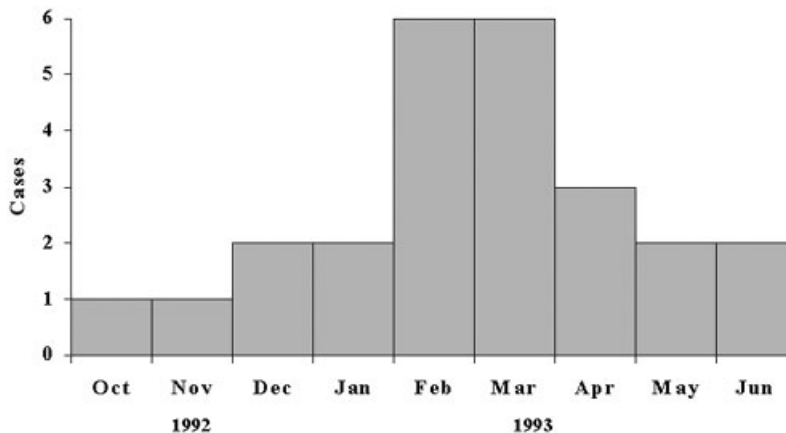
Bulletin No. 30

August 9, 1993

Rabies Alert - Vaccinate Your Dog(s)!!

A rabies epizootic (epidemic in animals) has been occurring in rural Alaska since late 1992. Between October 1, 1992 and June 30, 1993 the State Public Health Laboratory, Fairbanks has documented rabies in 25 animals. Most cases have been in Arctic or red foxes from the northwest or southwest regions of the state (table 1). From one to six cases have occurred each month (figure 1).

**Figure 1. Animal rabies cases.
October 1992-June 1993**



In June, exposure to a rabid dog in Nome resulted in six people receiving rabies post-exposure prophylaxis. The dog may have been bitten by an Arctic fox shortly before it became ill and the dog's rabies vaccination status was not up-to-date. All exposed people were contacted and provided human diploid cell vaccine (HDCV) and, if indicated, human rabies immune globulin (HRIG).

It has proven impossible to eliminate rabies from wildlife in Alaska. Rabies control measures depend on 1) vaccination of dogs and cats, and 2) aggressive efforts to control and eliminate stray animals and populations. Rabies vaccination is available from veterinarians or, for persons residing in rural communities, local lay vaccinators certified by the Alaska Rabies Control Program.

The Rabies Control Program provides medical consultation and HDCV and HRIG for pre- or post-exposure rabies prophylaxis. **The single most important step to prevent rabies in an exposed person is immediate and thorough cleaning of the wound.**

	Arctic Fox	Right fox	Dog
Barrow	6	0	0
Bethel	0	2	0
Elim	0	1	0
Emmonak	0	1	0
Kotzebue	0	1	0
New Stuyahok	0	1	0
Nome	2	0	1
Nuiqsut	1	0	0
Point Hope	3	1	0
Prudhoe Bay	0	1	0
Quinhagak	0	1	0
St. Michael	0	1	0
Savoonga	1	0	0
Shishmaref	1	0	0
Total	14	10	1

In general, rabies pre-exposure prophylaxis is indicated for persons among high risk groups, such as veterinarians, animal control and wildlife workers, certain laboratory workers, and travelers spending 30 days or more in foreign countries with enzootic (endemic in animals) rabies. Vaccination is not indicated for the general population of Alaska or for persons residing in areas of the state where rabies is enzootic. Human rabies has never occurred among fox trappers in Alaska and routine vaccination of fox trappers is not warranted.

(Reported by Don Ritter, State Public Health Laboratory, Fairbanks. Contributed by Michael Beller, MD, MPH, Section of Epidemiology.)