

Cat Rabies Cases Up 12 Percent in 2008

CDC says cats are less likely to be vaccinated against rabies than dogs.

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The number of rabies cases in cats increased 12 percent, despite a decline of 3.1 percent overall in animal rabies cases. Despite an overall 3.1 percent decrease in the number of animal rabies cases in 2008, the number of rabies cases in cats increased 12 percent, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association, citing Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) statistics.

In 2008, 6,841 cases of animal rabies were reported in the United States and Puerto Rico, according to a CDC report published in the Sept. 15 edition of the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

That was down 3.1 percent from 7,060 rabies cases in animals reported to the CDC in 2007. The number of human rabies cases doubled, from one to two, from 2007 to 2008.

The CDC said 294 cases of rabies in cats were reported in 2008, up 12 percent from 262 cases in 2007. In contrast, dog-related rabies cases fell about 19 percent from 93 in 2007 to 75 in 2008.

Wild animals, especially raccoons, bats, skunks and foxes, accounted for 93 percent of all rabies cases reported in 2008, the report stated.

Jesse Blanton, an epidemiologist at the CDC, said cats are more likely to be bitten by a rabid animal and less likely to be vaccinated against rabies than dogs.

"The CDC's general belief is that people are doing a good job vaccinating their dogs, but not their cats," Blanton said. "We have controlled canine rabies through the vaccination of domestic dogs, so we know that vaccinating works."

More than one-third of cat-owning households didn't visit a veterinarian in 2006, according to AVMA statistics, about twice the percentage of dog-owning households that didn't visit a veterinarian.