



HALDIMAND-NORFOLK HEALTH UNIT

PETS, PESTS & PUBLIC HEALTH

A newsletter for Haldimand and Norfolk veterinarians.

Working Together in Rabies Investigations

The Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit (HNHU) would like to remind all veterinarians that rabies is a reportable disease. As a reportable disease, vets are legally responsible to forward all relevant information regarding any animal bite/scratch incident to public health authorities.

This duty to report is explained in section 2 (1) of Ontario Regulation 557, Communicable Disease –General, under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, which states;

“a physician, registered nurse, veterinarian... or any other person who has information concerning any animal bite or other animal contact that may result in rabies in persons shall as soon as possible notify the medical



officer of health and provide the medical officer of health with the information.”

The information gathered from the victim and, if applicable, animal owner is crucial to the success of the HNHU’s investigation and, in turn, the prevention of human rabies cases. Incomplete or inaccurate information can cause a delay in locating the animal and taking appropriate action, resulting in undue risk

to the victim. To provide this information, the HNHU has attached the Report of Animal Bite/Scratch, which is to be completed in as much detail as possible.



Important Notice

Please fax all completed Report of Animal Bite/Scratch forms to our new fax number at: 519-426-9246. To report after-hours incidents, please contact us at 1-877-298-5888 and also fax the completed form to the number provided above. The Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit’s regular working hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Working together in Rabies Investigations	1
Local Cats Lacking Rabies Vaccinations	2
Tick Talk	3
West Nile Virus Re-emerges	4



Local Cats Lacking Rabies Vaccinations

While the majority of dogs investigated by the Health Unit as part of a bite incident are up-to-date with their rabies vaccinations, the same cannot be said for cats.

In 2012, approximately 44 per cent of domestic cats under investigation by the HNHU were not up-to-date with their rabies vaccination. The HNHU is

reminding indoor cat owners that the law does not exempt their pet(s) from being vaccinated.

In accordance with Ontario Regulation 567- Rabies Immunization, all dogs and cats that are three months of age or older must be vaccinated for rabies and must be kept up-to-date on their rabies vaccination for the duration of

the animal's life. Failure to do so can result in legal action against the pet owner, including ticketing and/or court summons.

Bats continue to be the most prevalent carrier of rabies in Ontario (see Figure 1), and with bats often found in the home, it is important for indoor cats and dogs to be vaccinated for rabies.

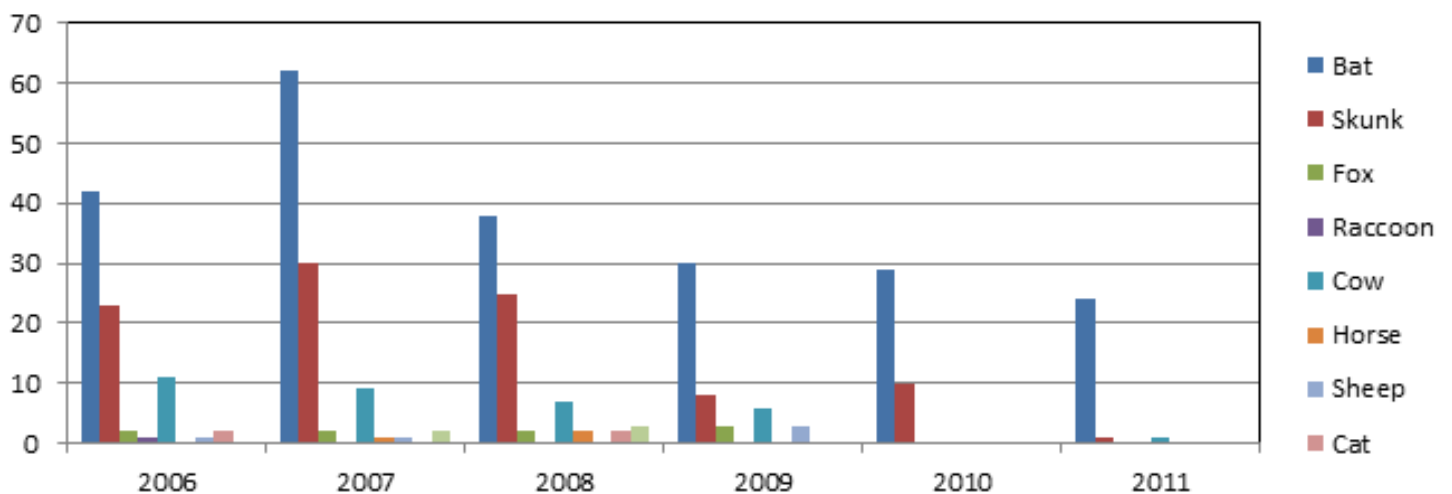


Figure 1. Number of animals testing positive for rabies in Ontario, per year, by species

Tick Talk

Over the past five years, the percentage of deer tick submissions that have tested positive for Lyme disease in Haldimand and Norfolk has steadily risen from approximately five per cent to 25 per cent (see Figure 2). Most of these positive specimens have been obtained from within or near the local endemic areas of Long Point and Turkey Point.

As a reminder, the endemic areas for Lyme disease in Ontario are:

- Long Point
- Turkey Point
- Rondeau Provincial Park
- Point Pelee National Park
- Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area
- Wainfleet Bog Conservation Area
- St. Lawrence Islands National Park

Please note that the precise boundaries of these established tick populations are difficult to define and some of these populations continue to expand into neighbouring areas.

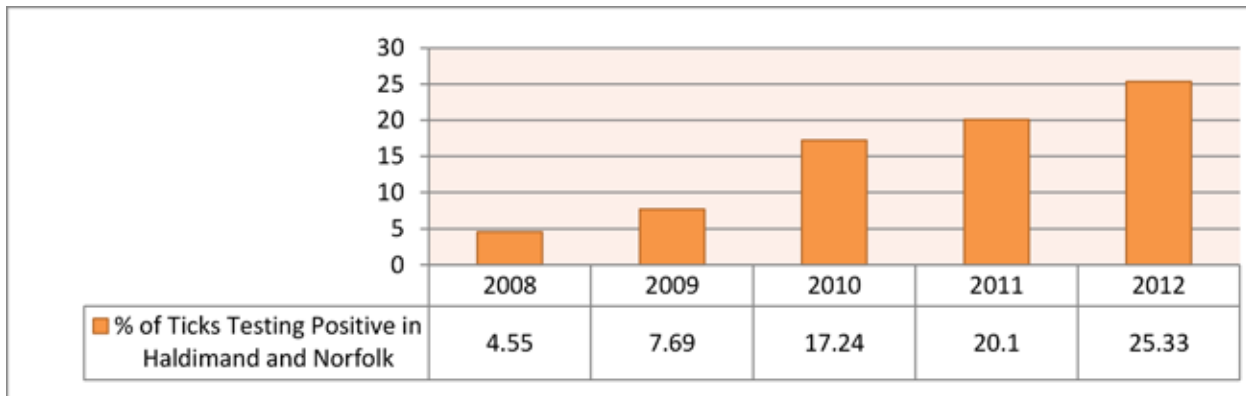
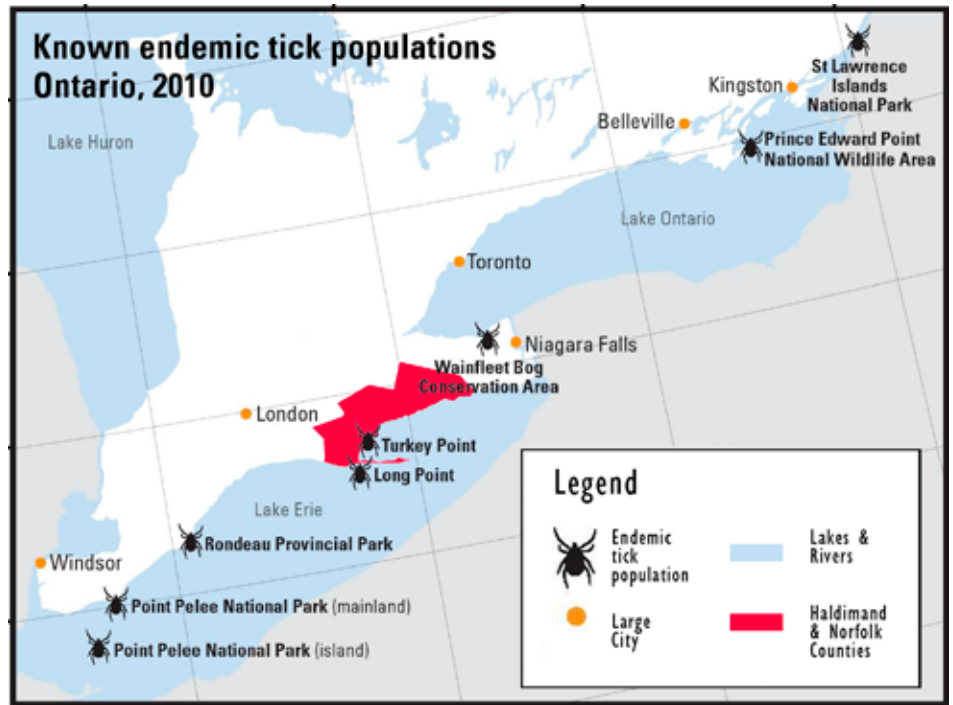


Figure 2. Percentage of deer ticks submitted to the HNHU testing positive for Lyme disease, 2008 to 2012

Testing Deer Ticks for Lyme Disease

The HNHU has continued to accept ticks for identification and Lyme disease testing. Please be advised this is for surveillance purposes only. Persons seeking diagnosis should not wait and rely on the specimen test results as they can take months to acquire. Persons bitten by a deer tick should consult their doctor immediately. The doctor will make a diagnosis based on the patient's symptoms and the tick exposure details (such as how long the tick was attached and where geographically the tick was acquired). Blood tests may also be requested. The HNHU's Tick Submission form can be found by visiting www.hnhu.org and clicking on 'Forms'.

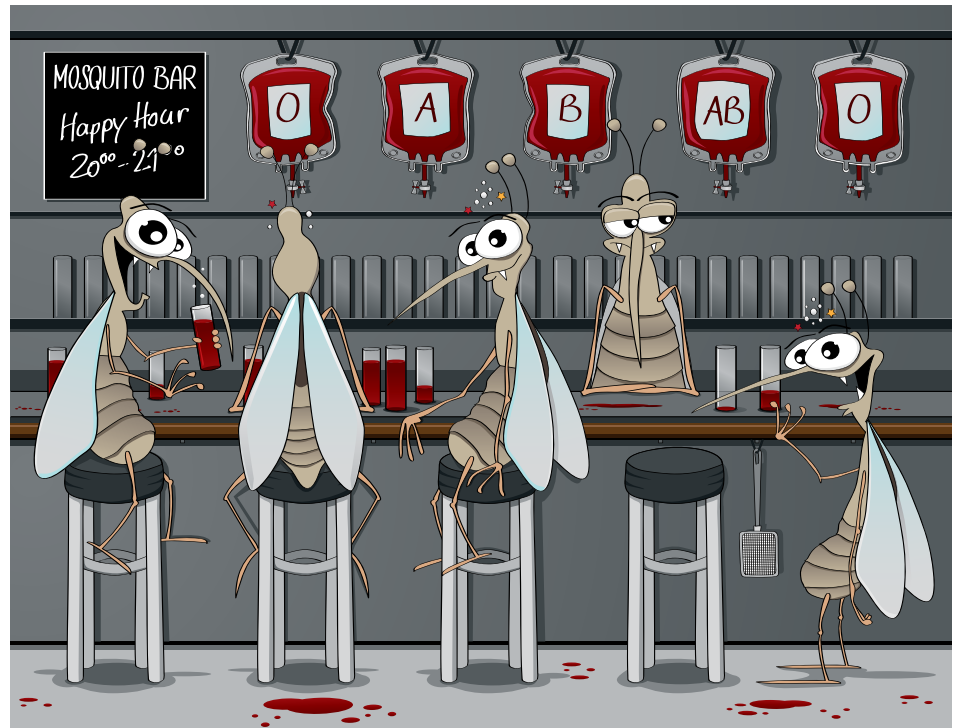
West Nile Virus Re-emerges

Don't let the title fool you; West Nile virus (WNV) has been endemic in Ontario for many years now. However, 2012 marked the second highest year of West Nile activity since 2002. In Ontario, as of October 23, 2012, 464 of the mosquito pools examined tested positive for WNV, and 252 human cases were reported. Sadly, with five human cases being reported to the HNHU in 2012, it was the highest annual human case count for Haldimand and Norfolk counties since the virus' appearance in North America in the late 1990s.

Weather's Role in WNV Resurgence

You may be wondering why WNV activity was so high when the year experienced low amounts of precipitation. While it is still unclear exactly why, here are some influencing factors:

- A mild winter increases the chance of infected mosquitoes surviving into the next summer.
- Generally, warmer temperatures accelerate the larval development. Warmer spring temperatures will hasten mosquito development, causing adults to emerge sooner, thus creating a longer mosquito season.
- An early start to the summer with warmer than usual temperatures in the early part of the season increases the viral load in infected mosquitoes, making them even more infective.



Hard Lessons Learned: A Horse Vaccination Reminder

After being notified of horses succumbing to WNV in Haldimand County and neighbouring regions, the HNHU was surprised to discover that a large number of horses in the area are not vaccinated against the virus. In each instance where the HNHU was notified of a WNV positive horse, its owners had admitted they did not have

all, or any, of their horses vaccinated for WNV. This was a hard lesson learned for owners when they lost their cherished pet. However, it reminds us that no one should assume that WNV is not present even if positive mosquitoes have not been found in the area, as was the case in Haldimand in 2012.



HealthUnit
Haldimand-Norfolk
www.hnhu.org ■ info@hnhu.org

Simcoe:
P.O. Box 247, 12 Gilbertson Drive
Simcoe, ON N3Y 4L1
519.426.6170 or 905.318.6623

Caledonia:
282 Argyle Street South
Caledonia, ON N3W 1K7
905.318.5367