

**A Summary of Rabies in Massachusetts, 2003**  
**Massachusetts Department of Public Health**

The following report summarizes data collected on animal specimens sent to the State Laboratory Institute for rabies testing in 2003. A cumulative report summarizing rabies testing results from 1992-2002 is available on the MPDH rabies website at [www.state.ma.us/dph/cdc/epii/rabies/rabies.htm](http://www.state.ma.us/dph/cdc/epii/rabies/rabies.htm).

**Number of Submissions and Positive Results by Species**

In 2003, 2,983 specimens were submitted to the State Laboratory Institute (SLI) for rabies testing. Of these specimens, 216 tested positive for rabies. **Table 1** illustrates positive animals in 2003 by species. Skunks and raccoons accounted for 77% of all positive animals. Cats constituted the highest number of submissions of any animal.

<b>Table 1. Number of Submissions, Positive Results, and Percent Positive by Species (sorted from highest to lowest by # of positive results), 2003</b>			
<b>Animal</b>	<b>Number Submitted</b>	<b>Number Positive</b>	<b>% Positive</b>
Skunk	250	86	34%
Raccoon	199	81	41%
Bat	603	23	4%
Fox	46	13	28%
Cat	1062	6	1%
Dog	477	2	<1%
Woodchuck	47	2	4%
Bobcat	2	2	100%
Squirrel	112	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2983</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>7%</b>

**Number of Submissions and Positive Results by Year**

As **Table 2** shows, in 2003 there were fewer submissions and subsequently fewer positive results compared with the past ten years. SLI received the fewest submissions for testing since 1992 and had the fewest positive results since 1996.

<b>Table 2. Number of Submissions, Positive Results, and Percent Positive by Year</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Number Submitted</b>	<b>Number Positive</b>	<b>% Positive</b>
1992	1079	57	5%
1993	3971	720	18%
1994	4532	735	16%
1995	3438	400	12%
1996	3005	115	4%
1997	3128	282	9%
1998	3938	498	13%
1999	3270	226	7%
2000	3310	276	8%
2001	3346	280	8%
2002	3137	304	10%
2003	2983	216	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39137</b>	<b>4109</b>	<b>10%</b>

### Number of Submissions and Positive Results by Month

As **Table 3** shows, in 2003 the highest numbers of submissions occurred during August and September. The lowest numbers of submissions occurred in December and February.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Number Submitted</b>	<b>Number Positive</b>	<b>Percent Positive</b>
January	188	15	8%
February	158	12	8%
March	191	10	5%
April	182	18	10%
May	195	16	8%
June	306	19	6%
July	356	15	4%
August	550	37	7%
September	272	22	8%
October	239	21	9%
November	182	21	12%
December	164	10	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2983</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>7%</b>

### Number of Submissions and Positive Results by County

In 2003, each of the 14 counties in Massachusetts submitted at least one animal for rabies testing and all counties except Nantucket and Dukes, had at least one positive animal (See **Table 4** below). Middlesex County submitted the highest number of animals (n=514) and Bristol County had the highest number of animals testing positive (N=46).

<b>County</b>	<b>Number Submitted</b>	<b>Number Positive</b>	<b>Percent Positive</b>
Barnstable	120	9	8%
Berkshire	60	6	10%
Bristol	284	46	16%
Dukes	3	0	0%
Essex	322	15	5%
Franklin	66	11	17%
Hampden	185	13	7%
Hampshire	70	5	7%
Middlesex	514	20	4%
Nantucket	2	0	0%
Norfolk	339	23	7%
Out of State	28	0	0%
Plymouth	343	38	11%
Suffolk	323	9	3%
Unknown	4	0	0%
Worcester	320	21	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2983</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>7%</b>