



Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor  
Eric E. Whitaker, M.D., M.P.H., Director

525-535 West Jefferson Street • Springfield, Illinois 62761-0001 • [www.idph.state.il.us](http://www.idph.state.il.us)

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Local Health Departments, Regional Offices of Illinois Department of Public Health, other agencies

FROM: Connie Austin, D.V.M., M.P.H., Ph.D.  
State Public Health Veterinarian

DATE: September 16, 2005

### SUBJECT: Fox with Rabies Identified in Champaign County, September 2005

On September 15, 2005, the Illinois Department of Public Health laboratory in Springfield reported that a fox from Champaign County tested positive for rabies. The fox was collected by Champaign County Animal Control. Champaign-Urbana Public Health District has reported that the fox was found wandering in broad daylight in a Champaign shopping center. The fox was staggering and aggressive as people approached and died shortly after capture.

This fox is the first terrestrial mammal (non-bat) testing positive for rabies in Champaign County since 1984 when a skunk tested positive. The last time a fox tested positive for rabies in the state was in 1989 in a fox from Kankakee County. Further testing to identify the rabies variant that affected the fox will be performed by the IDPH laboratory early next week. In addition, specimens from the fox brain will be sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for confirmation and further rabies variant typing.

Veterinarians in this area of the state in particular should consider the diagnosis of rabies in animals with consistent symptoms and arrange for testing as needed. They should also encourage rabies vaccination of dogs, cats and ferrets and consider vaccination of valuable livestock and horses. If veterinarians in this area hear reports of wild animals, such as foxes or skunks, acting abnormally they should report this to their local animal control agencies. This is also a good opportunity for veterinarians to review the rabies pre-exposure vaccination status of the staff in their clinic. Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for those with appropriate pre-exposure rabies vaccination is far simpler than rabies PEP for those who have not previously received rabies vaccination.

In Illinois from January 1 through September 15, 2005, 40 animals have tested positive for rabies. The animals testing positive include 32 bats, 6 skunks, one cow and one red fox. The 6 rabid skunks and cow are from a three county area in north central Illinois (LaSalle, DeKalb and Lee Counties).