

## Michigan Health Department Notified of Human Death to Rabies

On November 17, 2009 the Michigan Health Department issued notification of a human death due to rabies. Health Department officials in Michigan are working closely with the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) and local hospitals to investigate the exposure and the need for preventive vaccine in susceptible contacts. The last death due to rabies in Michigan was in 1983.

"We want to express our sincere sympathy to the family," said Dr. James Wilson, Medical Director for the Health Department. "We will do whatever we can to help ease their minds concerning this infection."

Rabies is an infectious disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system of mammals, including humans. It occurs mainly in wild animals, primarily raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes, and bats. According to MDCH, the most frequently found rabid animal in Michigan is the bat. However, not all bats carry rabies – less than 1% of them are rabid.

Rabies is spread by saliva through the bite of an infected animal. Non-bite infection is very rare, but may occur when wet saliva comes in contact with the eyes or mouth, or contaminates fresh open wounds. Rabies is not spread through touching, petting, or contact with blood, urine, feces, or dried saliva.

"We want to stress that there is no danger to the public, nor to persons who have had casual contact with this individual," said Dr. Wilson. "We do want to emphasize that proper precautions should be taken after exposure to any wild or domestic animal potentially infected with rabies. Rabies is absolutely preventable when post-exposure immunoglobulin and vaccine is administered."

Human rabies is rare in the United States, with only 55 cases diagnosed since 1990. Worldwide there are more than 30,000 deaths annually from rabies, mostly in countries without canine rabies vaccination programs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reports that wild animals accounted for 93% of rabies in the U.S. in 2008. Of these, nearly 35% were raccoons, 26% bats, and 23% skunks. The distribution among species varies by geographic region; only Hawaii is rabies-free.

Rabies is almost always fatal once the virus reaches the brain and symptoms begin. It is not possible to tell for sure if an animal has rabies just by looking. Rabies can be positively diagnosed only by laboratory testing of nervous tissue. Following infection the virus moves via the nerves to the spinal cord and brain, where it multiplies rapidly and then passes into the salivary glands.

Suspicious signs of rabies in animals include agitation, aggressiveness, excessive drooling, loss of fear of humans, and eventually paralysis and death. Symptoms in infected people may not appear for several weeks or even months after exposure to the virus. Symptoms in people include general malaise, fatigue, headache, and fever, followed by anxiety, confusion, agitation, delirium, seizures, and paralysis.

Rabies is easily prevented in animals by vaccination. All domestic pets and other animals that have frequent contact with people should be vaccinated. Human (and pet) rabies may be prevented by avoiding contact with unvaccinated, unfamiliar, and wild animals. Wild animals should be enjoyed from a distance, even if they appear friendly.

Human vaccine can prevent rabies when given after exposure to an animal with rabies. If you have been bitten by any animal, the Michigan Department of Health recommended these steps to prevent infection:

- Immediately wash the wound with lots of soap and water.
- Seek medical attention at once after washing the wound.
- Antibiotics and a tetanus vaccine may be needed to prevent other wound infections.
- If possible, have someone carefully and safely capture and confine the animal.
- If it is a pet, get the owner's name and contact information.
- Check with the owner for a current rabies vaccination.
- Make sure the bite is reported to your local health department and animal control office.
- Follow instructions for dealing with the animal.
- Possible instructions may include confining and observing the animal for signs of any illness for 10 days.
- It may be necessary to euthanize and submit the animal for testing. If this is the case, a veterinarian will

safely and properly prepare the animal for testing.

"It is very important that people be aware of what to do and when to do it, in order to prevent rabies," said Dr. Wilson. "It is especially imperative to seek prompt medical advice after any bat exposure. Any time a sleeping person awakens to find a bat in the room, or when a bat is found in a room with an unattended child, disabled person, or intoxicated person, the bat should always be submitted for testing."

Recent CDC data suggests that transmission of rabies virus from bats can occur after seemingly unimportant or unrecognized contacts. Vaccination should be considered unless the exposed person can be absolutely certain that a bite, scratch, or mucous membrane exposure did not occur.

For more information on rabies, see [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies).

### FDA Pet Food Recall Products List

The FDA launched a searchable database for pet food recalls dating back to January 1, 2006. The site also lists new recalls as they are announced. The site can be found at <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/newpetfoodrecalls/>.

### New "Family Friendly" CE Concept - Join Us January 23, 2010

The ISVMA is hosting a continuing education program designed specifically for veterinarians thinking about buying a practice or transitioning into ownership. The program will be held at the Peoria Civic Center on Saturday, January 23, 2010 from 3:00pm-6:00pm.

Ken Ehlen, DVM and Kirsten Poppen, JD, AVA from Simmons & Associates will be our instructors. Come learn about the buying process, cash flow and profitability, and get your questions answered. This interactive session will help you on your path to practice ownership. One of our objectives for the meeting is to begin developing a checklist of items for new owners or those considering ownership to review.

So, what is different? What is the new concept?

We want this to be a family outing! In addition to the quality CE program, we encourage our participants to bring their families. We have coordinated with the [Lakeview Museum of Arts & Sciences](#) in Peoria to host spouses and children during the CE program. We will all get back together at the Civic Center (veterinarians and family) at 6:15pm for dinner and then watch a [Peoria Rivermen](#) professional hockey game! ISVMA has reserved a block of tickets in the lower bowl so that our families can participate in a social and family-oriented program. We hope this will appeal to our membership demographic most likely to be interested in the educational subject matter.

<b>Registration Fees</b>	<b>Prior to 1/11/10</b>	<b>Prior to 1/20/10</b>
<b>Continuing Education Program</b>		
• ISVMA Member Veterinarian	\$90	\$110
• Non-Member Veterinarian	\$125	\$150
• Veterinary Student Member	\$50	\$60
<b>Dinner</b> (Veterinarians, Guests and Family) - *children under 7 eat free	\$20	\$25
<b>Hockey Game</b> (Lower Bowl Reserved Tickets)	\$18	\$18

[Registration](#) is available online now. *You must login to the ISVMA Member Center to register.* Please register early so that we can hold back the appropriate number of tickets for the hockey game!

### About the Photo

The [Whimbrel](#) (*Numenius phaeopus*) is a large, relatively short-legged shorebird with a long down-curved bill, striped head, brown speckled upperparts and light underparts with streaking on the neck and upper breast. Its underwings are light. Juvenile Whimbrels are buffier and have more light feather edgings on the back and wings.

The Whimbrel is the world's widest ranging curlew; nesting in the arctic regions of both the Old and New Worlds and wintering on coasts of southern North America through South America and, in the Old World, on the coasts of southern Asia south to Australia, and Africa.

The calls of this species include a tittering "bibibibibibi" outside of the breeding season and a "cur-lew" note during migration. Whimbrels suffered from some of the same problems that led to the extinction of the smaller but related Eskimo Curlew and more recently have shown declines that may be related to destruction of coastal wetlands along its

winter range.

I chose the Whimbrel photograph for this issue because every time I see one it makes me think of its close cousin, the Eskimo Curlew. If you have a bird or nature love on your holiday gift list, one of my very favorite books is *Last of the Curlews* written by Fred Bodsworth, a Canadian newspaper reporter and naturalist. First published in 1954, *Last of the Curlews* is a fictionalized account of the life of the last Eskimo Curlew. The story follows the bird throughout a year during its migration to South America and return to the Canadian Arctic in search of a mate. It is an inspiring story that helped me develop a deeper appreciation for environmental conservation and species protection.

I photographed this Whimbrel near Monterey, CA in the fall of 2004.

### Contact Us

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