



Report

on raccoon rabies
surveillance operations
in 2022

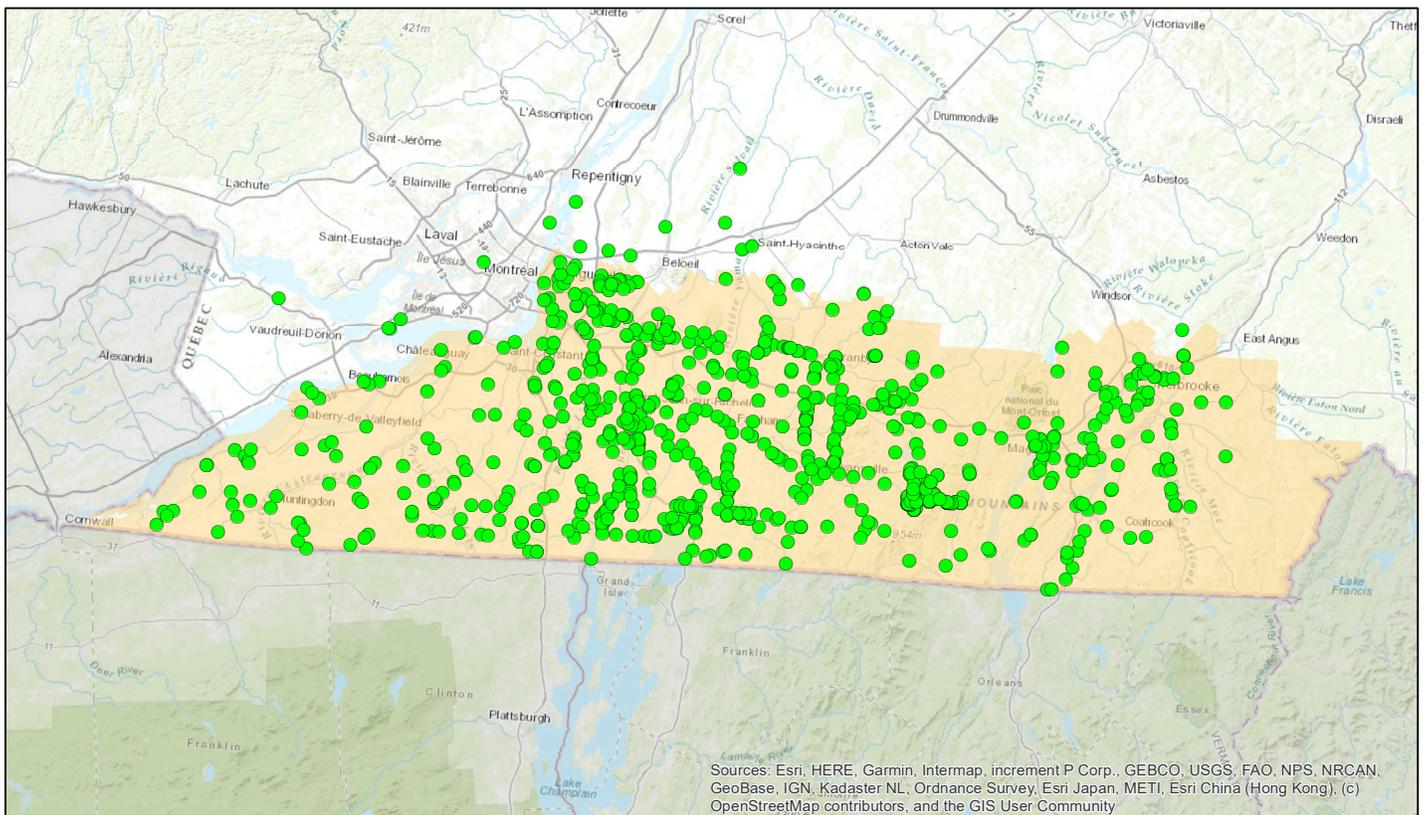
Rabies is a fatal disease that can affect all mammals, including humans.

Therefore, it is a major public health issue that warrants the maintenance of adequate surveillance in wildlife.

The enhanced surveillance of raccoon rabies in Québec is aimed at the early detection of any cases in the regions deemed to be at risk of introduction, namely Montérégie and Estrie.

This surveillance is done by collecting raccoons, skunks and foxes that are already dead or that appear disoriented, injured, abnormally aggressive or paralyzed. Laboratory tests are then performed to determine whether or not these specimens have rabies.

In 2022, the enhanced raccoon rabies surveillance area included 143 municipalities, Indigenous territories and unorganized territories in Estrie and Montérégie, for a total area of 11,541 km².



Legend

- Specimens collected and tested for rabies in 2022
- Surveillance Zone - 2022

Metadata

Map projection
Lambert conical projection

Datum
NAD 83

1:1 136 668

0 10 20 40 km

Sources of geographic information

BDTA 1: 250 000 MERN
BDGA 1: 1 000 000 MERN

Production

Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs
Service de la conservation de la biodiversité et des milieux humides
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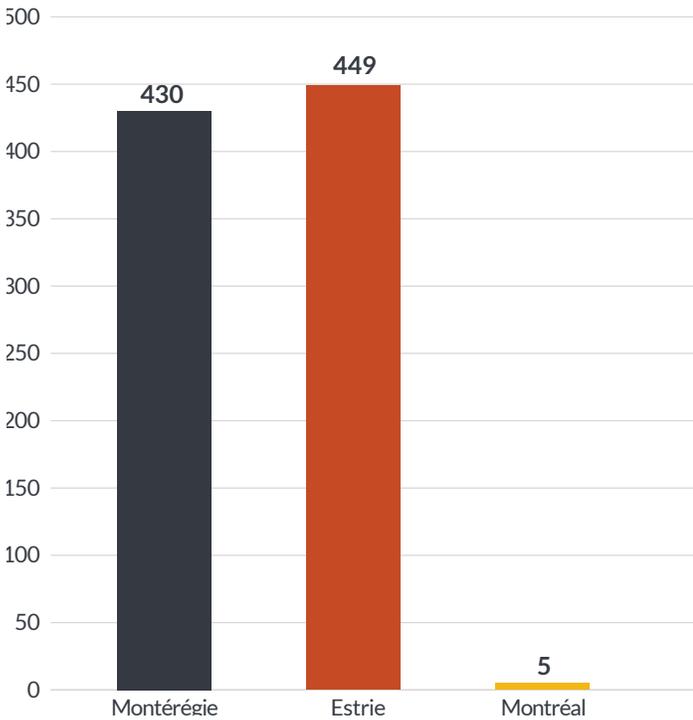


Québec

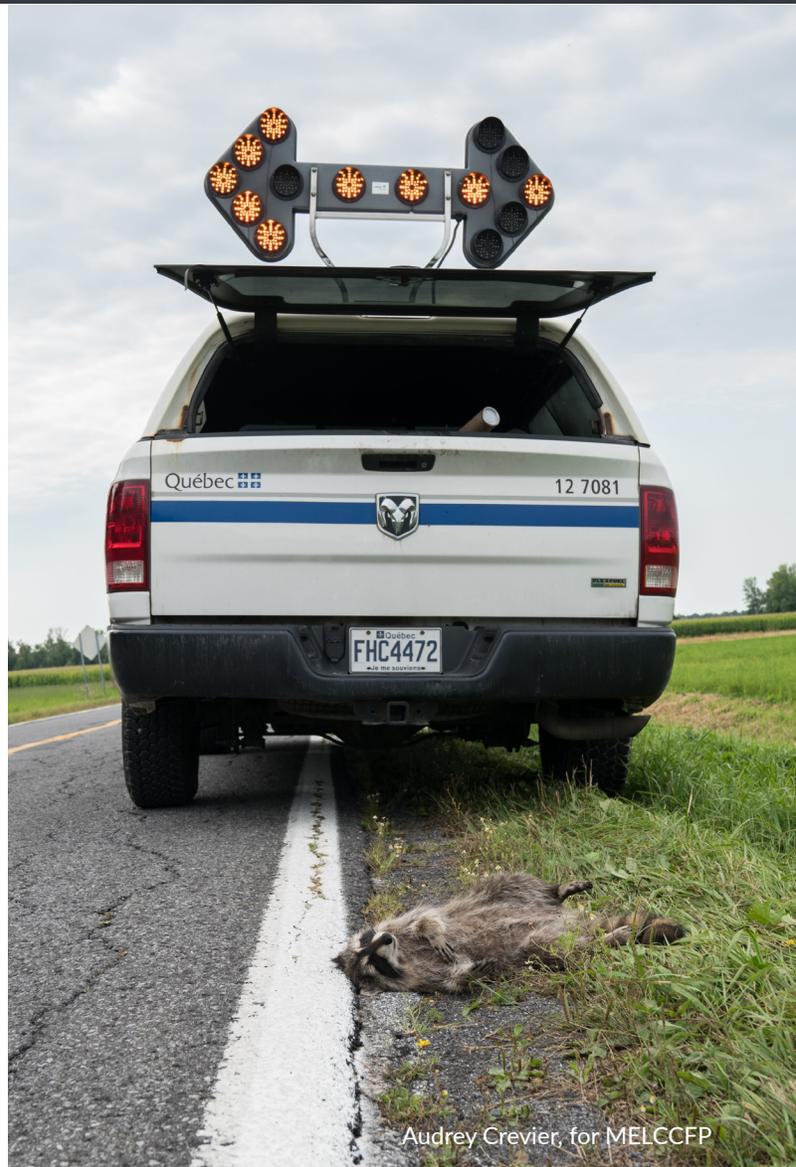
Map: Distribution of specimens collected for raccoon rabies surveillance in Québec between January 1 and December 31, 2022.

N.B. Occasionally, specimens reported outside the surveillance area are collected, when they are of interest for rabies surveillance.

Surveillance operations, conducted throughout the year, resulted in the collection and analysis of a total of 884 wild animals (sick or dead). This marks a slight increase of 2% in relation to 2021, when 868 specimens were collected. The number of specimens collected per year generally fluctuates between 700 and 1,200.



Number of specimens collected by region, as part of raccoon rabies surveillance in 2022.



Audrey Crevier, for MELCCFP

A REPORT DOES NOT ALWAYS LEAD TO THE COLLECTION OF AN ANIMAL.

Here are some examples:

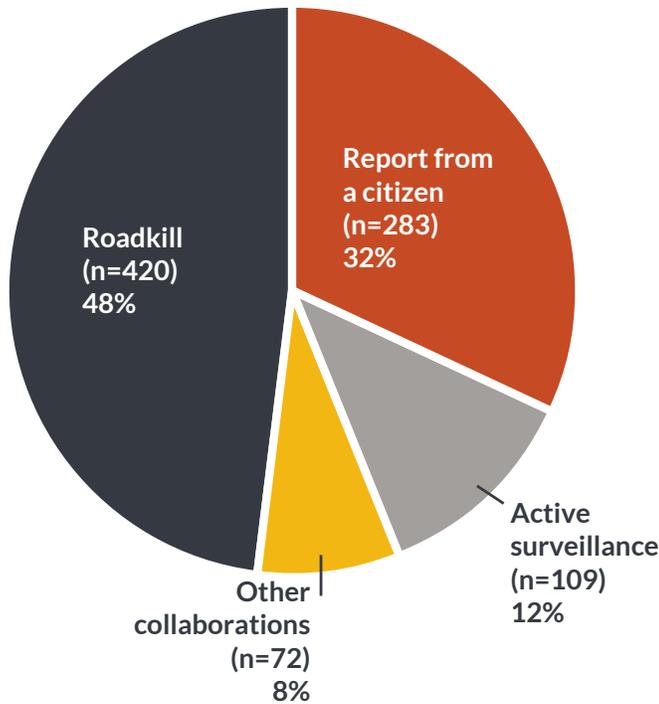
- An animal that is no longer available for collection;
- An animal not found in one of the targeted municipalities;
- An animal that does not have signs consistent with rabies;
- An animal that is not a target species;
- A dead animal that is too decomposed to perform rabies testing;
- A nuisance animal.



Audrey Crevier, for MELCCFP

COLLECTED ANIMALS AND TEST RESULTS

The animals collected in the context of enhanced surveillance are mainly animals reported by the public or roadkill. Public reporting is the best way to locate rabid wild animals. When this disease is present in an area, wild animals are observed with strange behaviour, without fearing humans and even during the day, which is contrary to the habits of many species.



Source of the 884 specimens collected in 2022.

REPORTS FROM CITIZENS

All told, we received 799 reports in 2022, a 4% decrease in relation to 2021. As a general rule, we receive and process between 500 and 1 200 reports each year. Among the reports received in 2022, 283 led to the collection of a suspect animal, equivalent to 35% of the reports.

TEST RESULTS

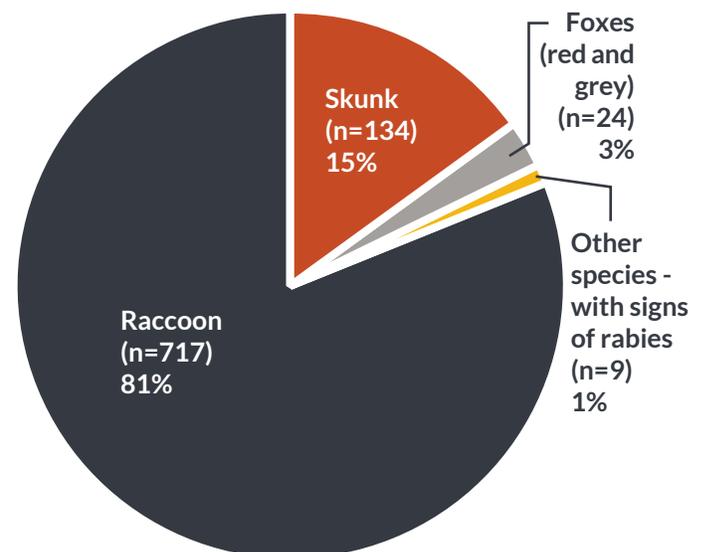
No cases of raccoon rabies were detected in Québec in 2022.

In August, enhanced surveillance led to the recovery of a dead raccoon on the side of a road in the municipality of Bolton-Ouest in the Estrie region. The results of the rabies analyses were contradictory. The specimen was identified as “dubious.” While the risk of a raccoon rabies incursion was deemed low, an active surveillance operation was conducted in October. It sought to ensure that no rabies outbreak had escaped notice during regular enhanced surveillance operations in the sector. During the operation, 109 specimens, i.e., 104 raccoons and five skunks, were analyzed. No case of rabies was detected, and the risk of a rabies outbreak was ruled out, thus allowing the return to normal surveillance activities.

The rabies test results are as follows:

- 840 negative specimens;
- 43 inconclusive or non-sampled specimens (over-decomposed carcass, crushed carcass, or unfit sample).
- A “dubious” raccoon.

Enhanced surveillance focuses on raccoons, skunks and foxes that are considered to be the most at risk species. Occasionally, other species may be collected if they show signs consistent with rabies.



Distribution, by species, of the specimens collected in 2022.