



RACCOON  
RABIES

**RABIES is DEADLY.**

# Report

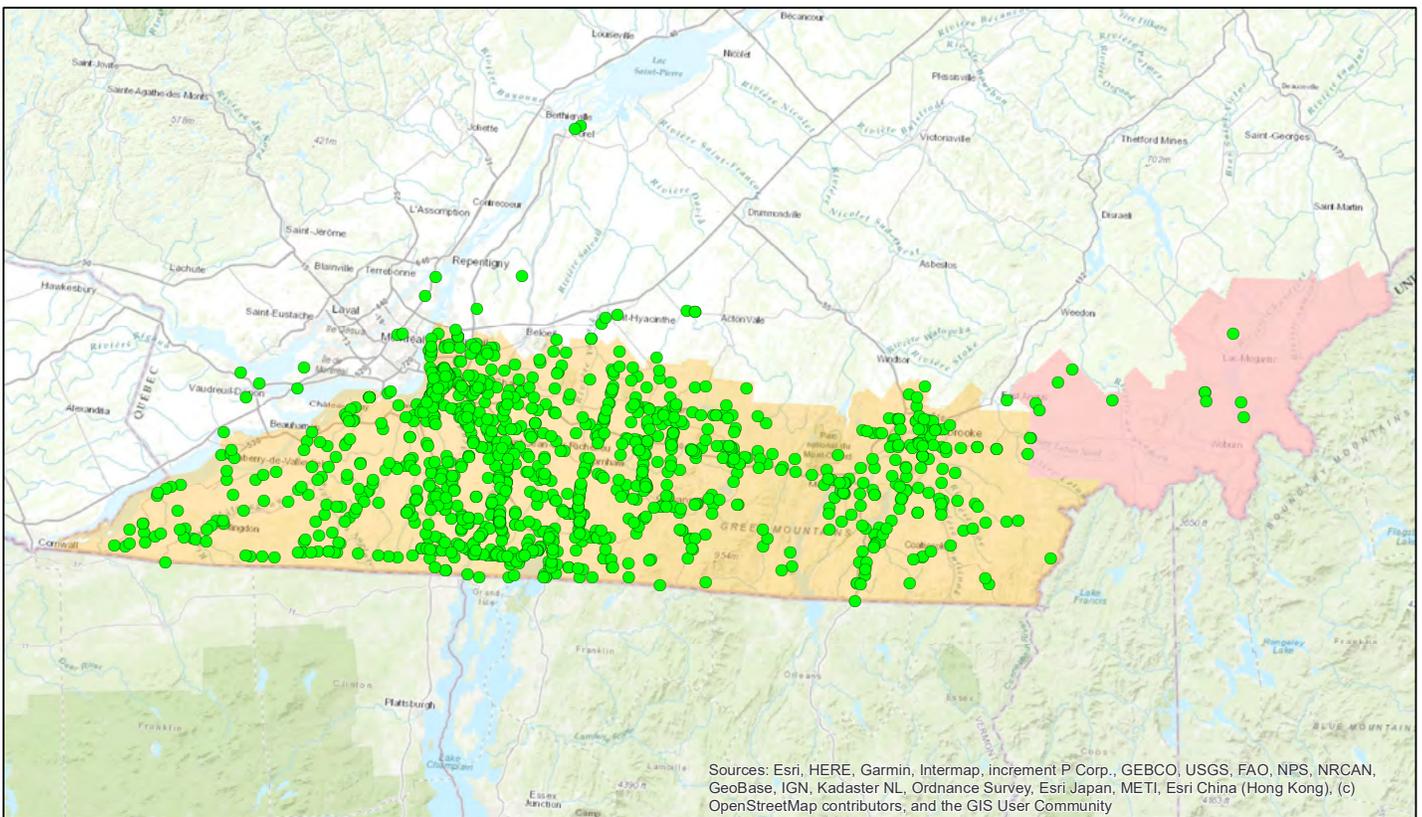
on raccoon rabies  
surveillance operations  
in 2023

**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 cases of raccoon rabies in wild animals 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 2023, the enhanced raccoon rabies surveillance area initially included 143 municipalities, aboriginal territories and unorganized territories in Estrie and Montérégie, for a total area of 11,541 km<sup>2</sup>. In June 2023, a case of raccoon rabies was discovered in Eustis, in northwestern Maine, about 23 kilometres from the Canada-U.S. border. In response to this case, the surveillance area was expanded in July 2023 to include a territory of 2,919 km<sup>2</sup>, encompassing 18 new municipalities in Estrie that are contiguous with or located near the border with Maine.



### Legend

- Specimens collected and tested for rabies in 2023
- Surveillance Zone - 2023
- Municipalities added to the zone, July 2023

### Metadata

Map Projection  
Lambert Conical Projection

Datum  
NAD 83

1:1 390 278

0 10 20 40 km

### Source

BDTA 1: 250 000 MRNF  
BDGA 1: 1 000 000 MRNF

### Réalisation

Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs  
Direction de la santé et du bien-être des animaux sauvages  
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Note : Le présent document n'a aucune portée légale

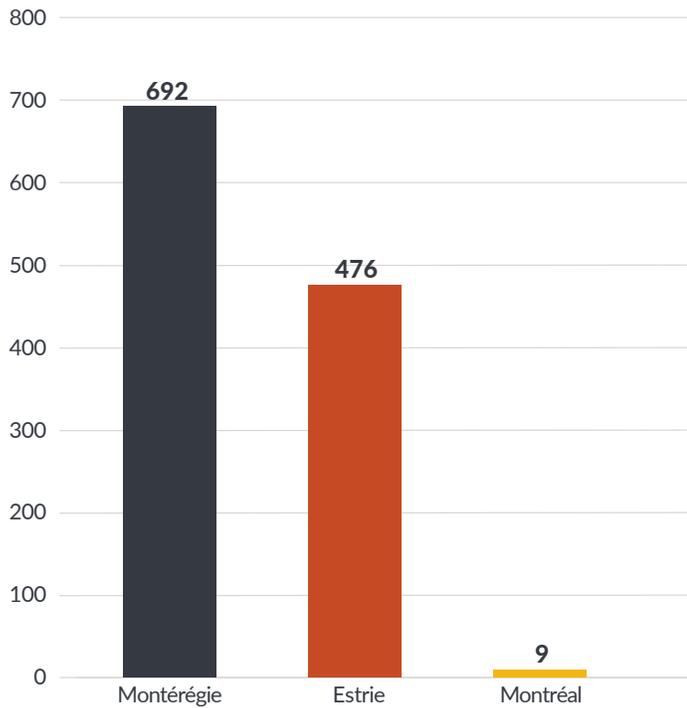


Québec

**Map: Distribution of specimens collected for raccoon rabies surveillance in Québec between January 1 and December 31, 2023.**

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 1,177 wild animals (sick or dead). This represents a significant 33% increase over 2022, when 884 specimens were recovered. 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 2023.



Audrey Crevier, for MELCCFP

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

Here are some examples:

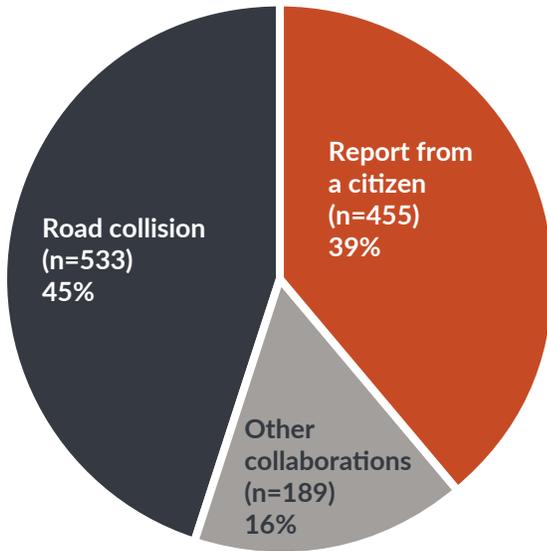
- An animal that is no longer available for collection;
- An animal not found in one of the targeted municipalities;
- An animal that does not have signs consistent with rabies;
- An animal that is not a target species;
- A dead animal that is too decomposed for laboratory testing;
- A nuisance animal.



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 1,177 specimens collected in 2023.

## REPORTS FROM CITIZENS

A total of 739 reports were received in 2023, down 8% from 2022. As a general rule, between 500 and 1,200 reports are received and processed each year. It should be noted that the way in which reports are compiled was changed in 2023, so that reports from regions other than Estrie and Montérégie are no longer recorded. This adjustment explains the decline.

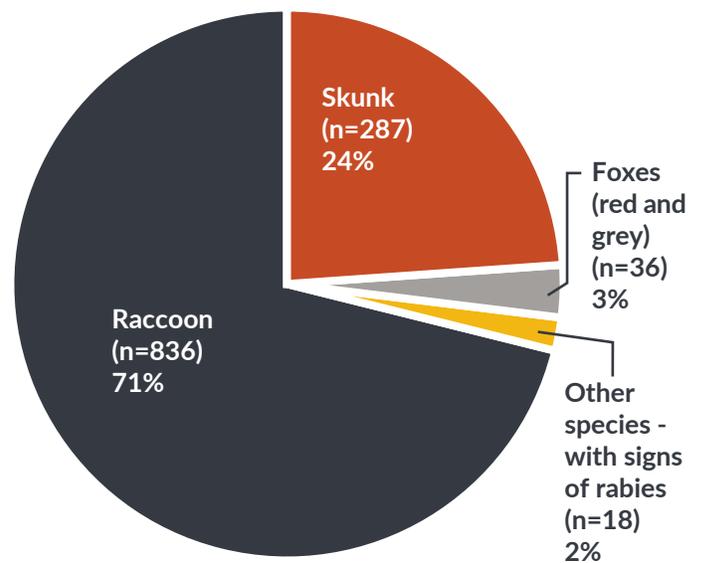
Of the reports received in 2023, 455 led to the recovery of a suspect animal, representing 62% of all reports. This proportion has increased compared with the last few years, because, starting in 2023, the reports compiled always come from regions covered by the enhanced raccoon rabies surveillance program.

## TEST RESULTS

No cases of raccoon rabies were detected in Québec in 2023. The rabies test results are as follows:

- 1,195 negative specimens;
- 82 inconclusive or non-sampled specimens (over-decomposed carcass, crushed carcass, or unfit sample).

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 2023.