

## Rabies Exposure

There were no human rabies cases in 2018. The last case reported in BC occurred in 2003. Bats are the only known reservoir for rabies in BC. When a person reports an encounter with a bat or other animal, public health authorities assess the rabies risk and may provide rabies post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent infection.

The rate of reported rabies exposures<sup>1</sup> in BC increased in 2018 for the second year in a row to 274 exposures or 5.6/100,000 (Figure 26.1). This is the highest rate in the last decade. In the last two years, there has been an increase in exposures occurring outside Canada, which accounted for 65% of all exposures in 2018. In 2018, the increase is specifically attributable to a greater number of dog exposures occurring among travelers. The exposure rate within BC and Canada has been stable for the last four years.

The majority (76%) of exposures occurring in BC or Canada involved bats, the only rabies reservoir in BC (Figure 26.2). Dogs, cats and monkeys accounted for 89% of international exposures. Ninety-two BC residents were exposed to dogs internationally, with 70% of these in various Asian countries. This is higher than in previous years when an annual average of 46 exposures to dogs occurred internationally (2013-2017). The reason for this increase is unclear. Forty-five BC residents

were exposed to monkeys in 2018, the majority occurring in Thailand and Indonesia; this is similar to last year.

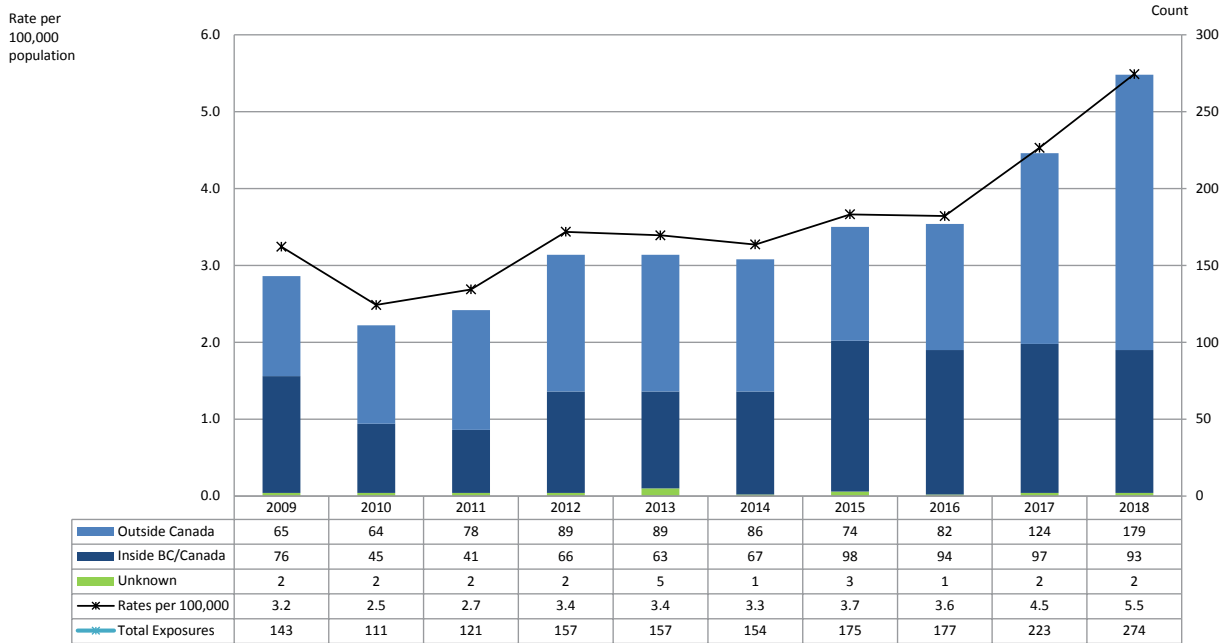
In 2018, Vancouver reported the highest rate of exposures at 8.8/100,000, with 87% of exposures occurring internationally. This HSDA experienced the largest increase in recent years, with the number of exposures outside Canada increasing to 52 in 2018. Fraser Health reported the highest number of rabies exposures (N=86) but rates close to the provincial average (Figure 26.5); the majority (69%) of exposures occurred internationally. The Northwest also reported a high exposure rate in 2018 but this represented a small number of exposures.

The highest rates of exposure were reported in young adults, the vast majority of who were exposed internationally (Figure 26.3).

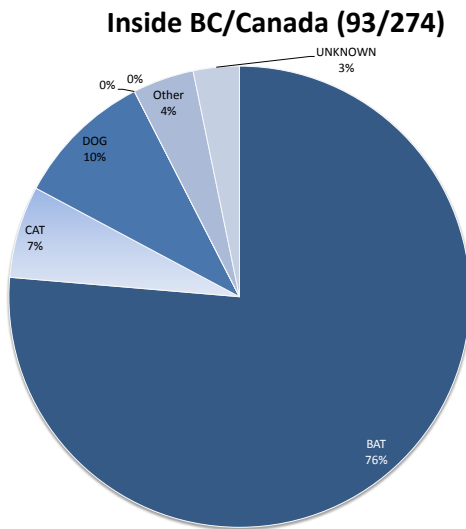
Most BC/Canada exposures were reported in July and August when bats are active (Figure 26.4). International exposures occurred throughout the year.

1. The terms "exposure" denotes a report of an individual exposed to an animal which presents a risk of rabies infection. Rabies exposures were defined in Panorama as "confirmed exposure" AND "MHO recommends RPEP".

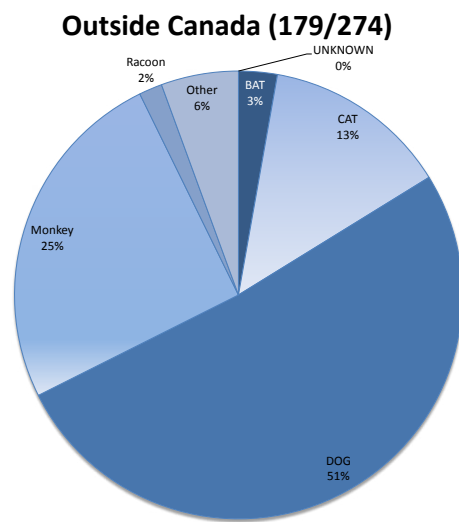
**26.1 Rabies Exposure Rates by Year, 2009-2018**



**26.2 Rabies Exposures by Animal Species Involved, 2018**

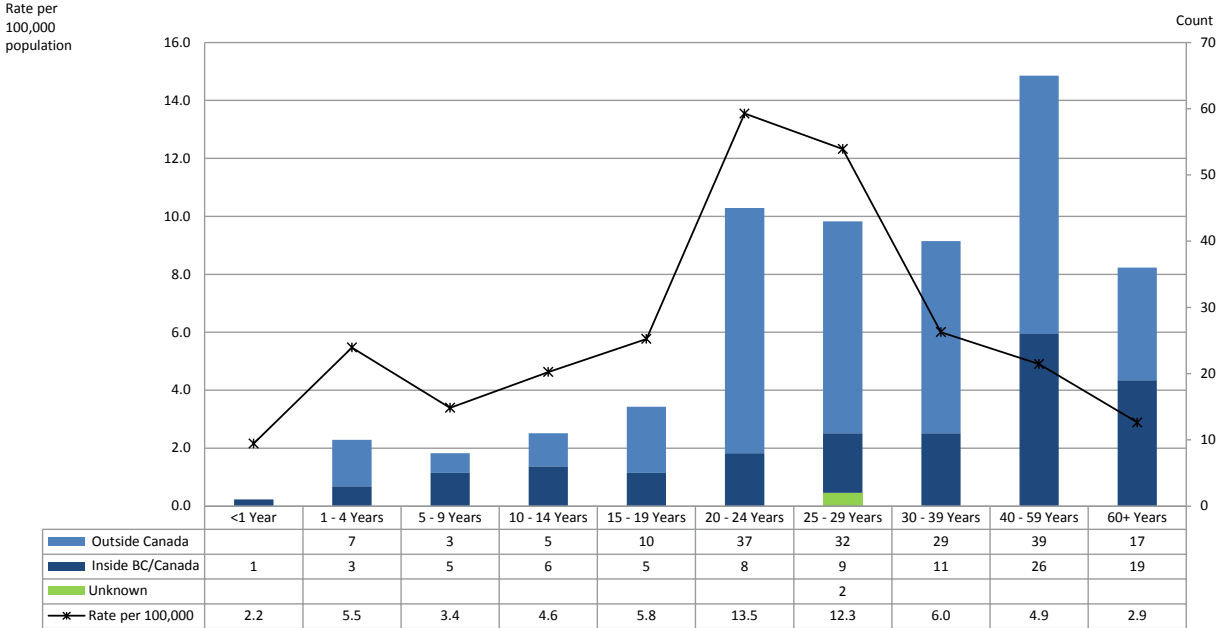


\*Omit 2/274

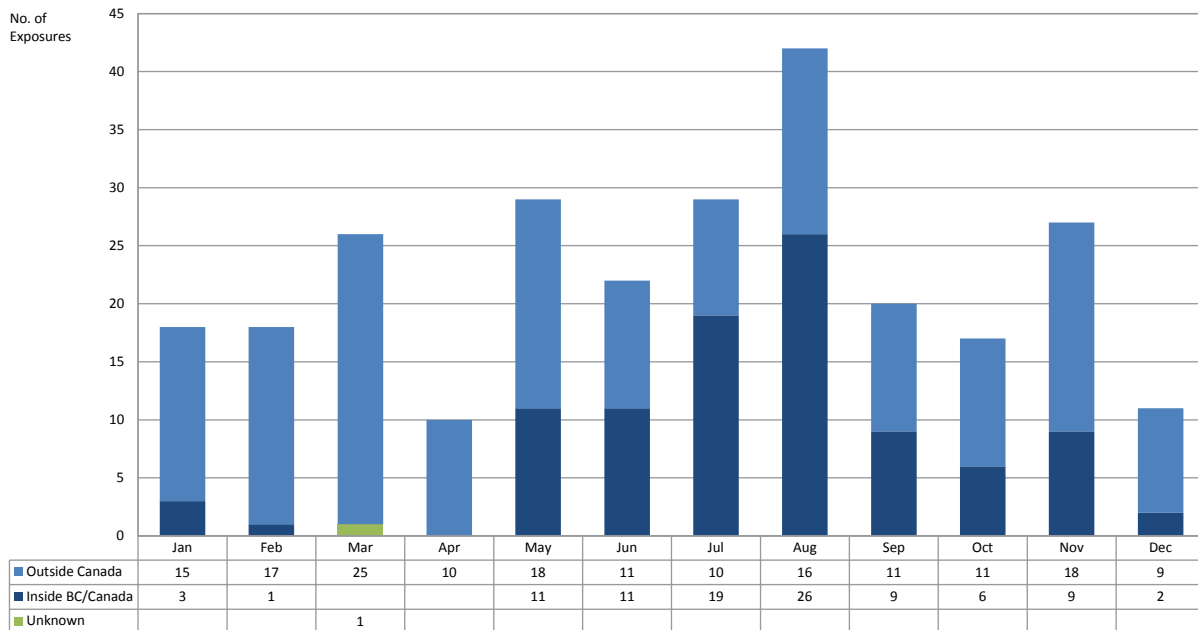


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### 26.3 Rabies Exposures by Age Group, 2018



### 26.4 Rabies Exposures by Month, 2018



### 26.5 Rabies Exposure Rates by HSDA, 2018

