RABIES CONTINUES TO BE A CONCERN AMONG VETERINARIANS

COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS — Although the number of reported human rabies cases in the United States is on the decline compared to past decades, it still continues to be of concern among veterinarians.

Dr. William H. Wunner of The Wistar Institute in Pennsylvania said that there will always be the risk of humans and animals contracting rabies.

“The threat of rabies spreading from wildlife reservoirs to and among domestic and wildlife animals as well as to humans remains a major public health concern,” said Dr. Wunner.

As long as humans and wildlife coexist, rabies will always be a problem. Transmission of this deadly disease is most commonly associated with bats, raccoons, and skunks.

Sarah N. Lackay, professor in the Department of Pathology at the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Georgia, said that positive rabies cases will continue as long as there is wildlife contact.

“Wildlife rabies presents a health problem to domestic small animals, which, in turn, have a higher risk for transmission to human beings because of their close contact with people,” said Dr. Lackay.

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Knowledge about rabies is a key factor in prevention. Those spending time outdoors in areas where rabies is prevalent in wildlife are at a greater risk and it is important to always keep pets up to date on their rabies vaccination.

“Household pets such as dogs, cats and even ferrets must receive a rabies vaccine every year in order to abide by state law,” Dr. Staci Dennis of Van Stavern Small Animal Hospital said. “It is also vital to reduce the instances of rabies in wildlife and in humans.”

While the disease continues to remain a concern among veterinarians and health care officials the number of positive human cases dwindles. With the proper precautions and safety measure taken rabies will soon be a problem of the past.

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