



HEALTH DISTRICT

# ANNUAL ANIMAL BITE REPORT 2024

**PREPARED BY**

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Epidemiologist

# What is Rabies?

Rabies is a virus carried by mammal species including cats, dogs, raccoons, bats, skunks, and foxes. Rabies is often spread when an infected animal bites a healthy animal or human. Symptoms of rabies in both humans and animals include confusion, headache, fever, fatigue, hallucination, and abnormal behavior. A commonly known sign of rabies is “foaming at the mouth,” which results from the illness attacking the nervous system and causing a combination of excessive saliva production, as well as difficulty swallowing.

When left untreated, rabies is a fatal illness. This means it is very important to see a doctor immediately if you believe you may have been exposed to, or bitten by, a rabid animal. The sooner treatment starts, the better the chance of recovery. Additionally, it is safest to ensure all domestic animals that are at risk of developing rabies receive timely rabies vaccinations. In fact, all dogs and cats residing in the Portage County Health District’s (PCHD) jurisdiction are required to be vaccinated against the rabies virus before 14 weeks of age. Some people who are at risk of being exposed to rabies because of their occupation may be eligible for a rabies vaccination (ex. veterinarians). However, it is not common practice to vaccinate people against rabies.

Other things you can do to prevent rabies, besides vaccinating your pets, are:

- Do not leave any food out for wild animals. This means do not leave food out for stray animals, seal all trash bags going into outdoor trash bins, and ensure your outdoor trash bins or dumpsters have secure lids.
- Do not approach or try to pet wild animals.
- Report any wildlife you see acting strangely to Ohio Division of Wildlife by calling 330-644-2293.

# Reporting and Data

Reporting of animal bites to your local health department is mandated by law. When a bite is reported, public health agencies can help ensure that you receive proper follow-up care and resources, coordinate rabies testing of the animal that you were bitten by, and/or direct proper quarantine procedure if you were bitten by a domestic animal.

Ohio Administrative Code Rule 3701-3-28, Part A states that when an individual is bitten by a dog or other non-human mammal, it must be reported to the local health department within 24 hours. If you need to report an animal bite, please do so as soon as possible. We can be reached by phone at 330-298-4490.

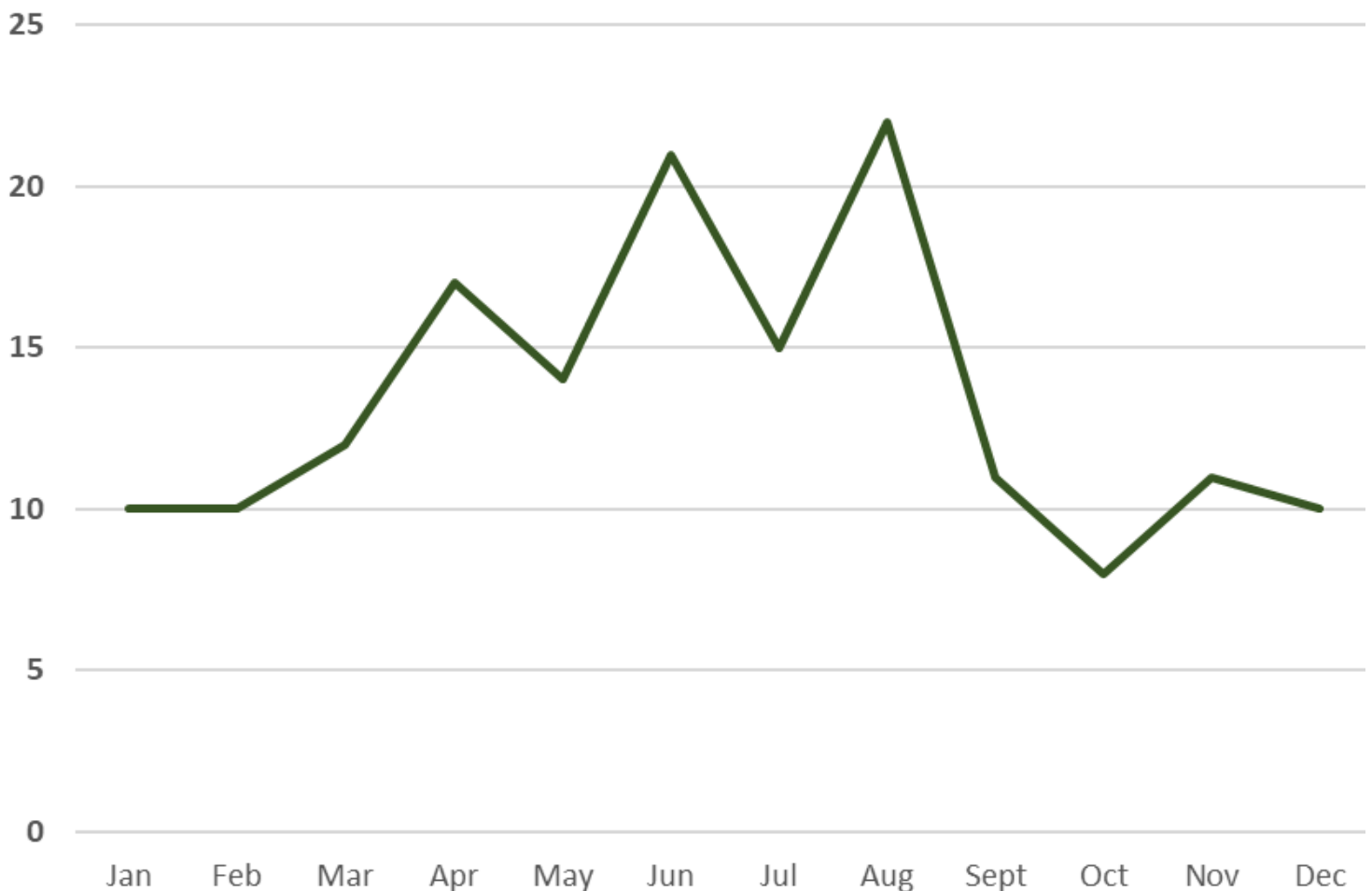
All data contained in this report is from the Ohio Disease Reporting System or the Portage County Health District's Animal Bite Reporting Database. Please note that the term "case" refers to a single animal regardless of the number of individuals or animals bitten by/exposed to the animal.

There was a single positive rabies test from a Portage County bat in 2024. No humans were exposed to the bat while it was alive, however a dog was bitten. The bite was reported to the Portage County Health District and the dog's veterinarian, and the animal received proper follow up care. Fortunately, no additional rabies cases occurred as a result of this case. This incident illustrates the critical importance of complying with reporting requirements for animal bites.

Any questions about this report or the contents therein can be directed to Olivia Card, the PCHD Epidemiologist. She may be contacted Monday-Friday from 8:00am to 4:30pm via phone at 330-296-9919 Extension 152.



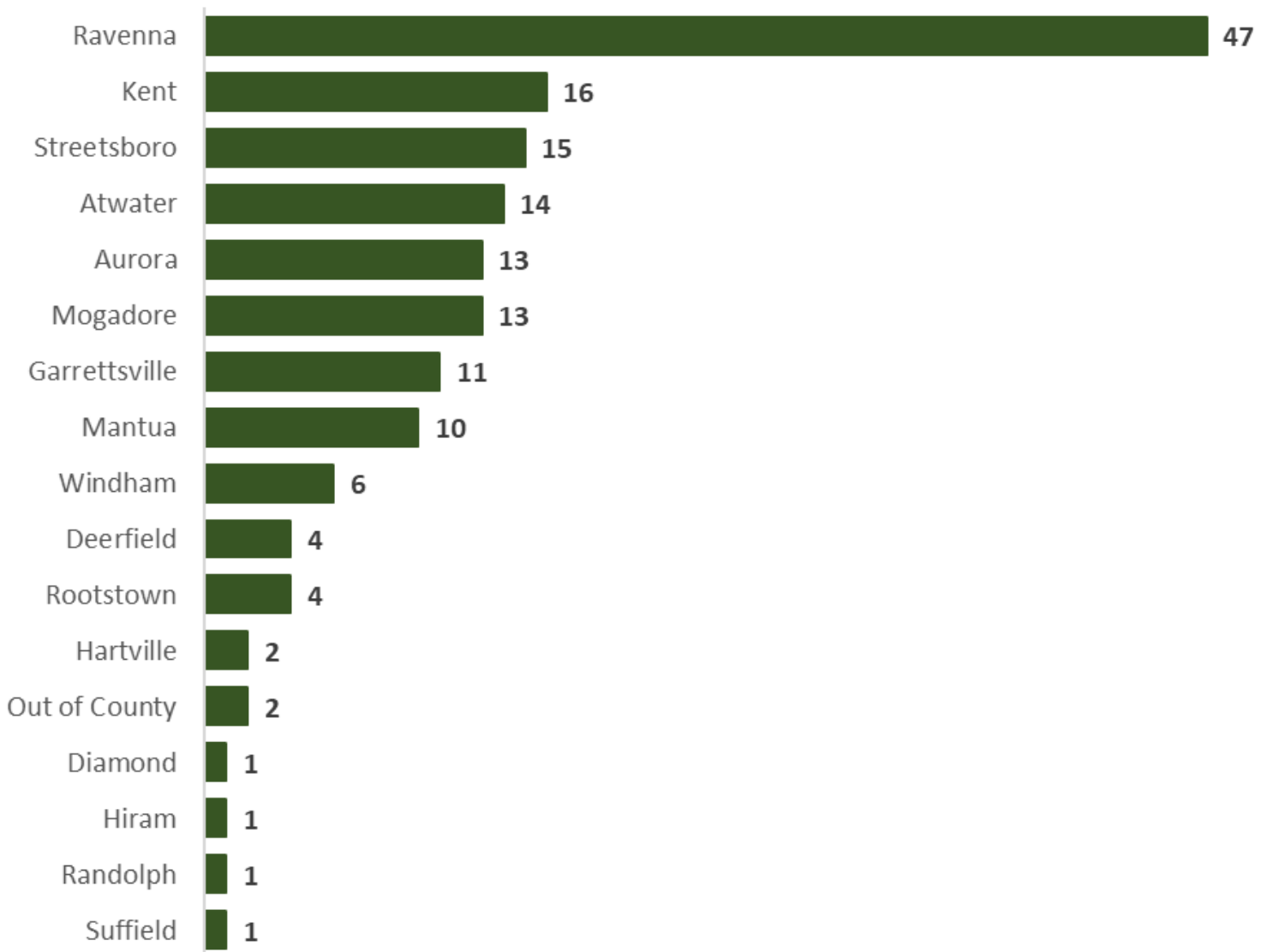
# Cases Reported to PCHD by Month



2024 Total: 161 cases reported

**Figure 1.** A graph displaying the number of animal bite cases reported to PCHD each month during 2024. In total, PCHD received 161 animal bite case reports. The average number of cases per month was 13.4. From April - August, the monthly number of cases was above average. This is likely because people and their pets are outside more often during the warmer months, resulting in more opportunities for bites to occur. Additionally, many wild mammals hibernate or become less active during the winter. However, it should be noted that animal bites were reported to PCHD every month of the year. Therefore, one should not be less diligent about rabies prevention just because it is cold outside.

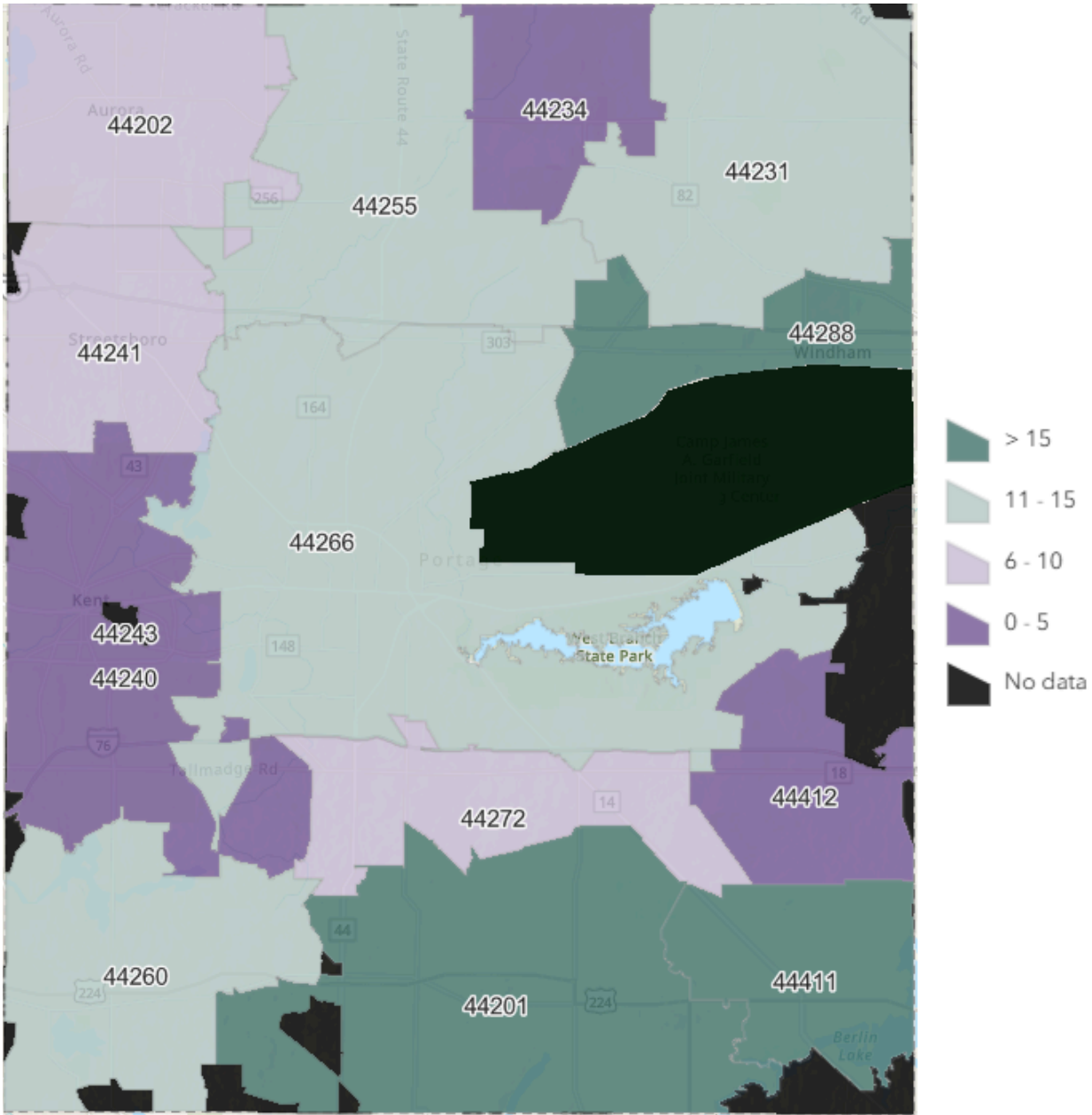
# Cases Reported to PCHD by Location of Occurrence



**Figure 2.** A bar chart displaying the number of animal bite cases reported to PCHD by residents of each city/township. The number of animal bite cases in Portage County townships/cities roughly corresponds with population size. In other words, more animal bites occur where more people live. However, it is surprising that Ravenna residents reported almost triple the number of bites reported by Kent City and Streetsboro residents.

# Zip Code Case Rate

(per 10,000 Residents)



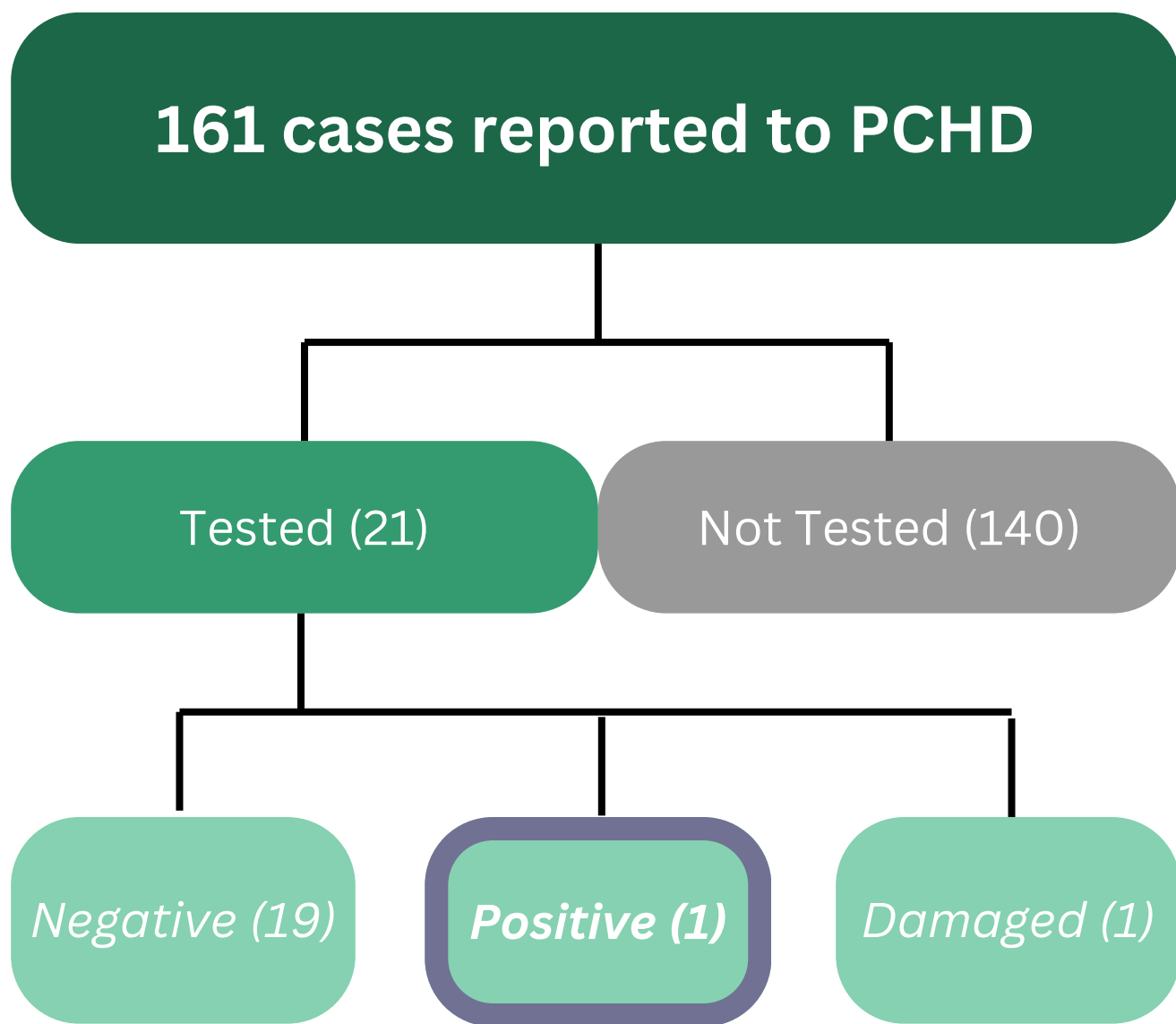
**Figure 3.** A map showing the animal bite case rate per 10,000 residents within each Portage County zip code. Areas with the highest case rates included Atwater, Deerfield, and Windham. These zip codes have fairly small populations, so even a small number of animal bite cases has resulted in elevated rates in the cases of Deerfield (four cases) and Windham (six cases). However, the Atwater area zip code, 44201, has a small population and a similar number of case reports (14 cases) to Kent City and Streetsboro. Thus, the 44201 zip code may benefit from additional animal safety education.

# Cases by Species

Animal	Number of Cases	Percent of Cases
Dog	101	62.73%
Cat	32	19.88%
Bat	16	9.94%
Raccoon	7	4.35%
Monkey	1	0.62%
Horse	1	0.62%
Field mouse	1	0.62%
Skunk	1	0.62%
Groundhog	1	0.62%

**Table 1.** A table showing the number of animal bite cases for each type of animal. Domestic animals were responsible for most of the reported animal bites, approximately 83%. These are the animals humans encounter most frequently, so they have more opportunities to bite people.

# Laboratory Testing: PCHD Submissions



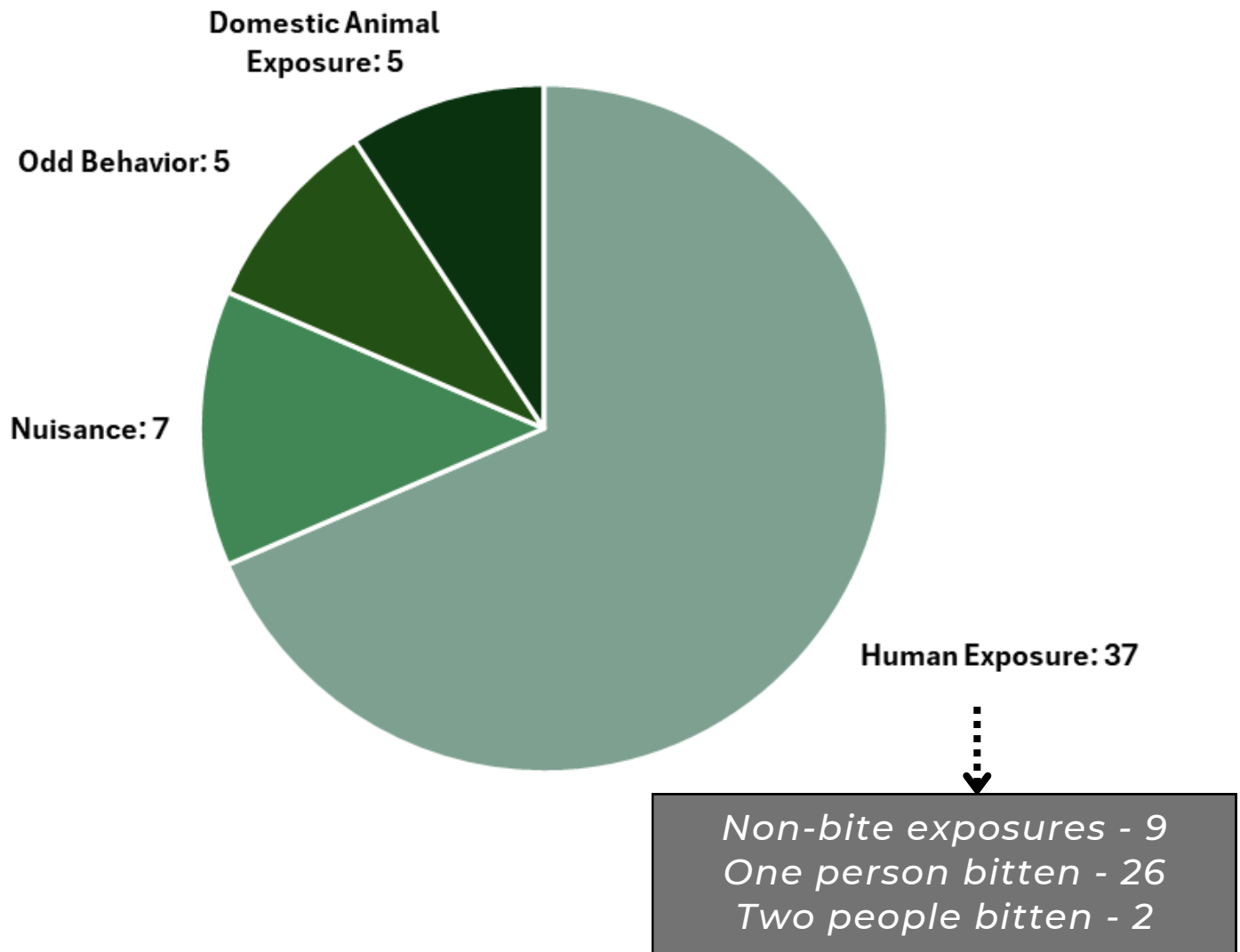
**Figure 4.** A flow chart summarizing rabies tests of animals submitted by PCHD to the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Microbiology Laboratory. As stated in the figure 1 caption, PCHD received 161 animal bite reports in 2024. Of those 161 animals, 21 were sent to the ODH Microbiology Laboratory for rabies testing. One animal that was sent to the lab was unable to be tested because its tissue was too damaged. 19 of the animals tested were negative for rabies, but one was positive for rabies. As discussed on page two of this report, the positive test was performed on a bat. The bat did not bite any humans prior to being tested. A dog was exposed to the bat, but it received proper follow-up care and monitoring.

# Laboratory Testing: All submissions

Animal	Number of Cases	Percent of Cases
Bat	19	35.19%
Dog	14	25.93%
Cat	13	24.07%
Raccoon	5	9.26%
Cattle	2	3.70%
Skunk	1	1.85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2.** A table showing the number of animals submitted by Portage County agencies (including PCHD) to the ODH Microbiology Laboratory for rabies testing. The most frequently submitted type of animal was bats. In fact, even though PCHD only received 16 reports of bat bites, 19 bats were submitted for testing. After bats, dogs and cats were the next most commonly submitted animals. It should be noted that while 101 dog bites and 32 cat bites were reported to PCHD, almost the same number of dogs and cats were submitted for testing. This may reflect under-vaccination of cats, under-reporting of cat bites or a high number of stray/feral cats in Portage County.

# Laboratory Testing: Test Reasons



**Figure 5.** A chart displaying the reason for rabies testing listed on laboratory submission paperwork. 37 submissions were the result of human exposures to the animal. Of those human exposures, nine were not bites, 26 involved a single person being bitten, and two involved two people being bitten. Five submissions were the result of a domestic animal being exposed to the submitted animal (e.g. a dog being approached by a raccoon). Seven submissions were the result of an animal acting as a nuisance (e.g. living under a deck, getting into a trashcan). Five submissions were the result of an animal behaving oddly (ex. an animal is acting aggressively, foaming at the mouth). As stated on page one of this report, nuisance or oddly-behaving animals can be reported to the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

# Additional Information

*Portage County Health District: Animal Bites and Rabies Prevention Webpage*

<https://portagehealth.net/our-programs/nursing/animal-bites-rabies-prevention/>

*Ohio Department of Health, Zoonotic Disease Program: Rabies Webpage*

<https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/zoonotic-disease-program/diseases/rabies>

*Ohio Department of Health, Zoonotic Disease Program: Rabies Post-Exposure Risk Assessment Tool*

<https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/zoonotic-disease-program/rabies-pep>

*Ohio Department of Natural Resources: Rabies Webpage*

<https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/wildlife-management/wildlife-disease/rabies>

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Rabies Webpage*

<https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>