Author's response to reviews

Title: Potential and Actual Terrestrial Rabies Exposures in People and Domestic Animals, Upstate South Carolina, 1994-2004: A Surveillance Study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
We respectfully submit the attached revised manuscript (second revision) entitled “Potential and Actual Terrestrial Rabies Exposures in People and Domestic Animals, Upstate South Carolina, 1994-2004: A Surveillance Study” for your second review. We addressed all the requested changes exhaustively as outlined below. We are confident that these changes are satisfactory. We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

IF
Synopsis of changes
- We revised the manuscript according to the reviewers’ suggestion. See detailed comments below.

Reviewers’ comments are quoted; our responses are set in **bold**.

**First Reviewer (M. Eidson)**

**Major compulsory revisions:**

1) p. 3, Background, insert ‘some’ in "South Carolina, like [some] other states" because not all states mandate reporting of human victims

   **Requested change made.**

2) p. 4, “Domestic exposure animals were categorized according to ownership status (stray, pet).” It is not clear how or where livestock were included.

   **The sentence was changed to:** “Dogs and cats were categorized according to ownership status (stray, pet)”

3) p. 5, “Animal victims, predominantly dogs, were reported in 2.7% of all incidents . . .” Unless I am reading Table 1 incorrectly, cats were 505 of the victims, whereas dogs were 41 of the victims, so ‘dogs’ should be changed to ‘cats’.

   **Mistake corrected.**

4) p. 6, “. . . while in owned cats, that proportion was only a third (33.3%)”

   The percentage is slightly different (32.3%) in the table.

   **Mistake corrected. The sentence was changed to:** “(…) while in owned cats, that proportion was less than a third (32.3%)”

5) Tables 1 and 4 appear to be similar, except that table 4 restricts to rabid animals only. So comparing them would be easier if they were similarly formatted. Currently the structure with lines is slightly different. Also, Table 4 includes livestock as an exposure animal but Table 1 includes ‘other’. Both tables would benefit from footnotes to explain what species are included in ‘other’, both for the exposure animal and the victim. The footnote in Table 1 that is not in Table 4 about exclusion is confusing.

   **We changed to format of the two tables to be identical and added footnotes on the “other” and”livestock” categories, listing the species they include with their numbers.**

**Minor essential revisions:**

1) Figure title is confusing, recommend “Distribution of ownership status (owned
vs. stray) among cats and dogs implicated as the exposure animal in incident reports, Upstate South Carolina, 1994-2004."

The requested change was made.

Discretionary revisions:

1) Consider using the plural noun in a few places, such as 'exposures' in the title, and for species such as skunks, foxes. 

As requested, the plural is used for foxes, skunks and raccoons and “exposures” is used in the title as well as in other places where appropriate.

2) p. 7, Recommend breaking for new paragraph with “Animals were far more commonly exposed to rabid animals . . .”

The requested change was made.

3) p. 8, The mention of 'bat' at the top of the page is confusing because bats have been excluded.

The erroneous reference to bats was removed.

Second Reviewer (J. Blanton)
Minor revision

Page 7, third line: bats included in list of wildlife exposures despite exclusion from study.

The reference to bats was removed.