

Human Rabies Relatively Rare, Health Chief Says

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Human cases of rabies are comparatively rare. In reply to a questionnaire sent out in 1962 by the World Health Organization, 25 countries stated that they were rabies-free, but another 50 reported a total of

681 cases of human rabies in 1960 and 355 in 1961. The United States contributed 2 human cases of the disease to the 1960 world total and 3 to that of 1961. All in all, perhaps, a modest enough reckoning considering the area involved. Notwithstanding, the occurrence of rabies is dreaded. Once symp-

toms appear, the disease is always fatal. The last case of human rabies in Los Angeles County was reported in 1959, and followed the bite of a rabid bat. The infection, however, was acquired out-of-state. This was the first human case of the disease reported in the County

since 1949 when one death occurred. The source of infection in this instance was a rabid dog. . . . MANY WILD and domestic animals may transmit the disease. In California during 1963, rabies was found in 144 skunks, 83 dogs, 51 bats, 5

foxes, 5 horses, 6 cows, 4 bobcats, 1 coyote, and 1 cat. Owing to the San Diego rabies epidemic this year in which 57 dogs were infected, the number of rabid dogs was considerably above normal. The source of this epidemic was traced to rabid wildlife and domestic animals that came into this

country from south of the border. As is shown by these figures, wildlife rabies may spill over into the domestic animal population, particularly the dog. And, as urban development encroaches more and more into hitherto unsettled areas, the likelihood of contact in-

creases. So as long as there is a reservoir of susceptible, unimmunized dogs in the community, there is considerable danger that the infection may be transmitted to man. RABIES IS fairly well controlled in man by antirabies vaccine. But this treatment is not always successful. According to the WHO study already mentioned, deaths from rabies following or during treatment

numbered 70 in 1960 and 54 in 1961. Since 1957 Los Angeles County has been an officially declared rabies area. This means that by law all dogs 4 months of age or older must be vaccinated against rabies and licensed. The vaccination must be repeated every one or two years according to the type of vaccine preparation given. Nonetheless, a large number (Continued on Page 9)

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