

The Star-Ledger/**Eagleton-Rutgers Poll**

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RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Sunday's *Star-Ledger*. Other newspapers may also use this information in their Sunday editions. Electronic media may release after 5:00 P.M. Saturday, July 20, 1991. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to the "*Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*".

NEW JERSEYANS EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT RABIES; SUPPORT DOG AND CAT LICENSING AND VACCINATIONS

The rabies epidemic that is spreading across New Jersey has gained the attention of most state residents. Among those who have heard about the increase in this disease, close to 9-in-10 voice concern.

The *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*, conducted by telephone with 800 New Jersey residents between June 18 and June 24, also found that there is almost unanimous support (97%) for local laws requiring dogs to have a license and a rabies shot and about 9-in-10 state residents say there should be similar laws for cats.

The survey also found that while close to half of the state's residents have pets, over the past fifteen years there has been a decline in pet ownership.

Rabies Epidemic

Information about the rabies alert in New Jersey has reached most state residents. While 72 percent have read or heard a "great deal" (36%) or "some" (36%) about the epidemic, 16 percent say they have read or heard "not much." Only 10 percent of the state's residents know "nothing at all" about this health problem.

Most New Jerseyans are concerned about the spread of rabies in the state. Overall, 86 percent say they are "very" (51%) or "somewhat" (35%) concerned compared to 14

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percent who are "not very" (12%) or "not at all" (2%) concerned. State residents who have heard "a great deal" (71%) are more likely than those who have heard "some" (38%) or "not much" (32%) to be "very" concerned.

Residents in non-urban areas (74%) of the state are more likely than those living in urban areas (65%) to have read or heard a "great deal" or "some" about rabies. Also, homeowners (77%) are more likely than renters (64%) to have read or heard a "great deal" or "some" about this disease. State residents who own dogs (75%) and cats (77%) are somewhat more likely than non-owners (71%) to have read or heard "a great deal" or "some" about the rabies epidemic.

"Since there are substantial safety concerns related to the rabies epidemic it is useful to know that most New Jerseyans are informed about this issue," commented Janice Ballou, Poll Director.

Pet Inoculations

Local laws that require both dogs and cats to have a license and a rabies shot are endorsed by almost all state residents. Nine-in-ten (87%) New Jerseyans say there should be a law in their town requiring cats to have a license and a rabies shot and almost all residents (97%) support this requirement for dogs.

Both dog and cat owners strongly support laws requiring licensing and inoculations. While 80 percent of the cat owners agree that cats should be required to have a license and a rabies shot, 98 percent of the dog owners feel that way about regulations for dogs.

Currently, 86 percent of the state's residents report that there is a law in their town for dog licensing and inoculations, 2 percent say they do not have this law, and 12 percent don't know. In comparison, only 32 percent say their community has this requirement for cats, 2 percent say their community is considering this ordinance, 24 percent do not have a cat law, and 41 percent do not know if there are licensing and inoculation laws for cats in their community.

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Currently, most dogs and cats in the state have had an annual rabies inoculation. Among dog owners in the state, 94 percent say their pets had a rabies shot in the past year,

2 percent have had a shot, but not in the past year, and 3 percent have not had a shot.

In comparison, 84 percent of the cat owners have vaccinated their pets this year, 3 percent had shots, but not this last year, and 11 percent have not been inoculated.

Ballou noted, "New Jerseyans clearly want to expand local regulations for dog licensing and rabies vaccinations to include cats. Even though most dog and cat owners already would meet the requirement for the rabies inoculation, making it the law increases public confidence that their safety is being protected."

Pet Ownership

Close to half of all New Jerseyans have some type of pet. However, there has been a decline in pet ownership in the past fifteen years. Currently, 46 percent of the state's residents say they have a pet, which is 8 points lower than the 54 percent who had pets in 1976. More New Jerseyans have dogs (28%) than have cats (20%), birds (6%), fish (6%), or other animals (6%). Dog ownership has dropped 21 percentage points in the past 15 years from 49 percent to the current 28 percent. The number of cat owners (20%) is the same as it was in 1976.

Home owners (50%) are more likely than renters (38%) to have pets. State residents who are 18 - 29 years old (57%) and those in the 30 - 49 year old range (51%) are more likely to have pets than New Jerseyans who are 50 years old or older (34%).

"Over the past 15 years there have been major changes in lifestyle such as dual income families and an increase in single heads of households which may be the reason for declining dog ownership," commented Ballou.

BACKGROUND MEMO--RELEASE SL/EP34-4 (EP84-4), SUNDAY, JULY 21, 1991

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton Poll was conducted between June 18 and June 24, 1991, when a random sample of 800 New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, was interviewed by telephone. Figures based on this sample size are subject to a sampling error of about ± 3.5 percent. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. Sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The questions and figures referred to in this release are presented below. The location of each question on the actual questionnaire is in brackets.

"Do you own or keep any pets in your household?" [Q.38]

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	46%	54%	100%	(800)
<u>Age</u>				
18 - 29	57	43	100	(180)
30 - 49	51	49	100	(344)
50 or older	34	66	100	(265)
<u>Residence</u>				
--own home	50	50	100	(536)
--rent	38	62	100	(244)

PAST SURVEYS

April, 1976	54	46	100	(743)
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"What kinds of pets do you have? (For each one named, Ask: How many (name pet) do you have?)" [Q.39]

	<u>June, 1991</u>	<u>April, 1976</u>
Dog(s)	28%	49%
Cat(s)	20	20
Bird(s)	6	1
Fish(es)	6	4
Snake(s)	1	*
Small furry animals (e.g. mice, gerbils, rabbits, etc.)	3	*
Other	2	1

*Not asked on 1976 poll.

"Has your (name dog, cat, or dogs and cats) had a rabies shot in the past year?" [Q.40]

	<u>Had Shot</u>	<u>Did Not Have Shot</u>	<u>Have Had Shot, Not In Past Year</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	89%	8%	3%	1%	101%	(800)

Pet Ownership

--owns a dog	94	3	2	0	99	(221)
--owns a cat	84	11	3	1	99	(173)

"As far as you know, in your town is there a law that dogs have to have a license and a rabies shot?" [Q.41]

	<u>Has A Law</u>	<u>Does Not Have a Law</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	86%	2%	12%	100%	(800)

"In your opinion, should or shouldn't there be a law in your town requiring dogs to have a license and a rabies shot?" [Q.42]

	<u>Should Be A Law</u>	<u>Should Not Be A Law</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	97%	2%	1%	100%	(800)

Pet Ownership

Dog

--dog owner	98	2	0	100	(221)
--does not own a dog	96	2	2	100	(579)

Cat

--cat owner	95	4	1	100	(173)
--does not own a cat	97	2	1	100	(627)

"And, in your town is there a law that cats have to have a license and a rabies shot?" [Q.43]

	<u>Has A Law</u>	<u>Does Not Have A Law</u>	<u>In Progress of Getting A Law</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	32%	24%	2%	41%	99%	(800)

"In your opinion, should or shouldn't there be a law in your town requiring cats to have a license and a rabies shot?" [Q.44]

	<u>Should Be A Law</u>	<u>Should Not Be A Law</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	87%	9%	4%	100%	(800)

Pet Ownership

Dog

--dog owner	91	8	2	101	(221)
--does not own a dog	85	10	5	100	(579)

Cat

--cat owner	80	16	4	100	(173)
--does not own a cat	89	7	4	100	(627)

"How much have you read or heard about the spreading rabies epidemic in New Jersey--a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all?" [Q.45]

	Great <u>Deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	Not <u>Much</u>	Nothing <u>At All</u>	Don't <u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	36%	36%	16%	10%	1%	99%	(800)
<i>Type of Location</i>							
--urban	32	33	23	12	0	100(128)	--non-urban
<i>Residence</i>							
--own home	39	38	14	8	0	99 (536)	--rent 32
<i>Pet Ownership</i>							
<i>Dog</i>							
--dog owner	42	33	16	9	0	100(221)	--does not own a d
--cat owner	40	37	15	7	0	99(173)	--does not own a c

"And, how concerned are you about this spreading rabies epidemic in New Jersey--very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned?" [Q.46]

	Very <u>Concerned</u>	Somewhat <u>Concerned</u>	Not Very <u>Concerned</u>	Not At All <u>Concerned</u>	Don't <u>Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
June, 1991	51%	35%	12%	2%	1%	101%	(721)
<i>Awareness of Rabies Epidemic</i>							
--heard a great deal	71	23	5	1	0	100(313)	--heard some