

# Can North American animals such as rabbits, cows, or pigs serve as hosts for Zika virus?

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## Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases

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The mosquito-borne Zika virus might be able to infect and reproduce in a variety of common animal species, and a new study looked at 16 different types of animals, including goats, pigeons, raccoons, and ducks, to determine their potential to serve as hosts for Zika virus.

Understanding possible transmission routes and the role that animal infections could play in the transmission and spread of Zika virus is crucial for effective surveillance and prevention efforts, as described in an article published in *Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases*.

In the article entitled "Investigating the Potential Role of North American Animals as Hosts for Zika Virus," coauthors Izabela Ragan, Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine (Manhattan, KS), and Emily Blizzard, Paul Gordy, and Richard Bowen, Colorado State University (Fort Collins, CO) report on their experimental infection of animals common in North America. The researchers tested the animals' blood for the presence of infectious [virus](#) and antibodies to Zika virus.

"This paper answers a very important question regarding the potential role of non-primate vertebrates in the transmission cycle of Zika virus," says Stephen Higgs, PhD, Editor-in-Chief of *Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases*, and Director, Biosecurity Research Institute, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS. "It is vitally important to understand the potential for the virus to be transmitted outside of a human-mosquito cycle. The possibility that domesticated or wild animals living in close proximity to humans might serve as an unseen reservoir for Zika virus would have a great impact on our ability to control Zika virus in an urban environment."

**More information:** Izabela K. Ragan et al, Investigating the Potential Role of North American Animals as Hosts for Zika Virus, *Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases* (2017). [DOI: 10.1089/vbz.2016.2099](https://doi.org/10.1089/vbz.2016.2099)

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