



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Woodford County
Health Department**

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To: Area Media
From: Andrea Ingwersen

For Immediate Release

Bat Tests Positive for Rabies in Woodford County

Woodford County Health Department (WCHD) officials have recently received a report that a deceased bat collected from a garage in Germantown Hills home tested positive for rabies. There was no human exposure and no reported cases of rabies in humans in Illinois this year. This is the first bat to test positive for rabies in Woodford County since 2002.

Bats are more active this time of year, which means the possibility of exposure to rabies increases. WCHD would like to remind residents to avoid bat exposure, and vaccinating pets is crucial to preventing rabies transmission. Additionally, bats flying outside at night pose little risk to humans. Bats are naturally more active during the evening from April to mid-October.

According to Illinois Department of Public Health, the number of bats submitted for rabies testing across the state has ranged from 1,300 to 1,700 each year over the past five years, the number testing positive for rabies is typically around three percent. To date, in Illinois, 29 bats have tested positive for rabies in 2018.

Bats are the primary carriers of rabies in Illinois. You cannot tell by looking at a bat if it is rabid. The animal does not have to be aggressive or exhibit other symptoms to have rabies. Changes in any animal's normal behavior, such as difficulty walking or an overall appearance of illness, can be early signs of rabies. A bat that is active during the day, found on the ground and unable to fly, is likely to be sick. Such bats should never be handled.

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. Humans can get rabies after being bitten or scratched by an infected animal.

The following tips can help prevent the spread of rabies:

- Call your physician if you are ever scratched or bitten by stray or wild animals.
- Exercise extreme caution if you see a nocturnal animal, such as a skunk or bat, in daylight hours.

- If a bat is in your home, do not release the bat outdoors until after speaking with public health officials. Woodford County Health Department cannot remove or handle live animals.
- If you are able to do so without putting yourself at risk for physical contact or being bitten, try to cover the bat with a large can or bucket, and close the door to the room. Call a licensed professional pest control operator to remove the bat.
- Do not handle, feed or attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Do not try to nurse sick wild animals to health. Call an animal rescue agency for assistance. Report strangely behaving stray or wild animals to local animal control.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Maintain homes and other buildings so bats cannot gain entry.
- Be a responsible animal owner. Keep vaccinations up-to-date for all pets (indoor/outdoor). Seek immediate veterinary assistance if your pet has been bitten by a wild animal or exposed to a bat.

For further questions and additional information, please contact the Woodford County Health Department at (309) 467-3064 or www.woodfordhealth.org

For more information about bats and rabies in Illinois, visit www.dph.illinois.gov

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